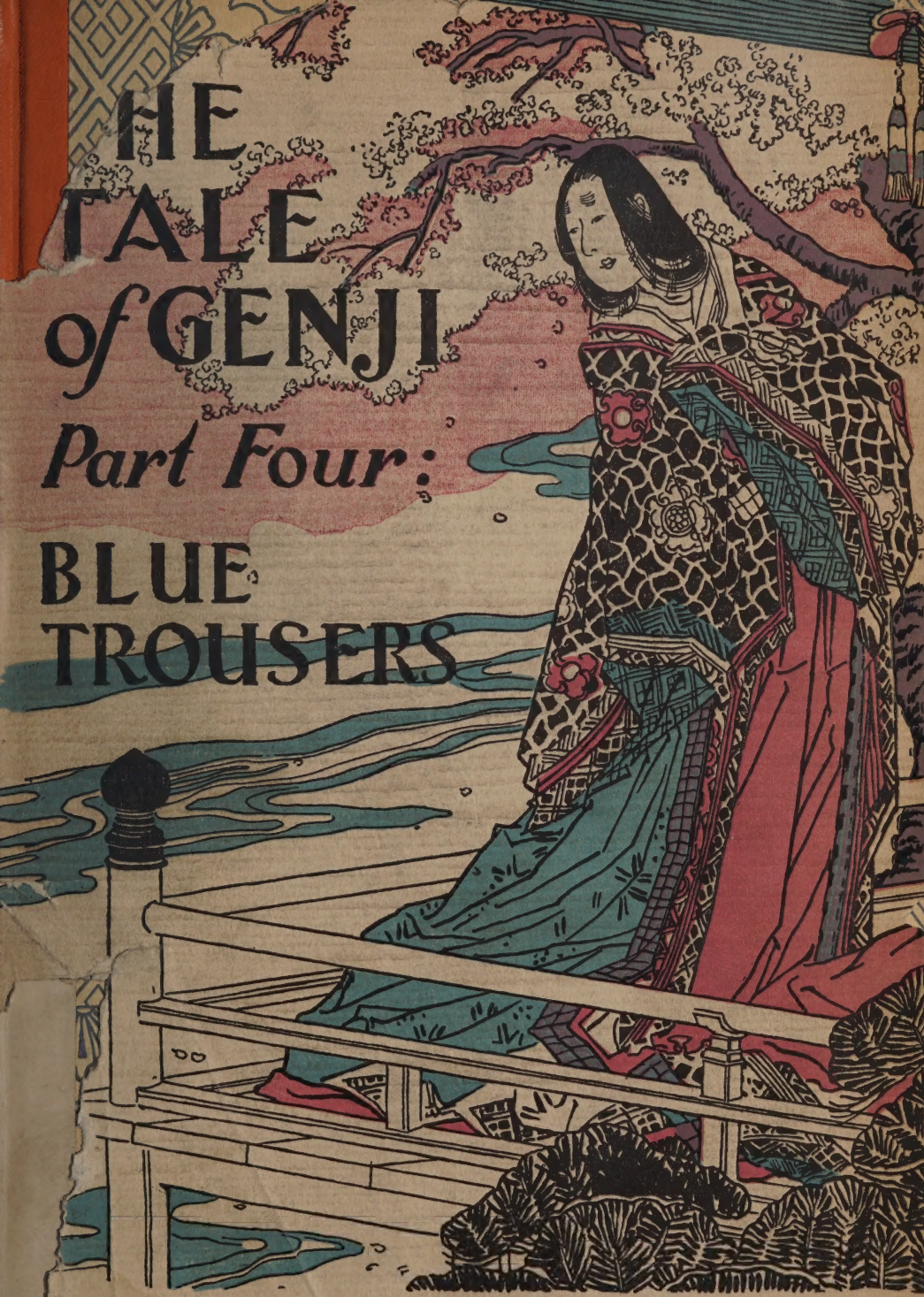
THE TALE of GENJI

Part Four: BLUE TROUSERS



Lady Murasaki

$3.50

THE TALE OF GENJI

Part IV—Blue Trousers

By Lady Murasaki

Translated from the Japanese by
Arthur Waley

HERE is completed the life and adventures of that exquisite, powerful, and wanton prince of mediæval Japan whose youth and early manhood were described in 'The Tale of Genji,' 'The Sacred Tree,' and 'A Wreath of Cloud.' Like the preceding volumes, it is clever, observant, and witty, reproducing the court life of the time with marvelous freshness and vitality. There are character portraits, bits of gossip, moments of philosophic humor, and, perhaps, best of all, the enchanting story of Genji's many love affairs.

Readers of the earlier volumes applauded it in remarkable fashion, the *New York Times*, for example, calling it, 'A story as robust as "Tom Jones," as discerning as "Don Quixote," and as untrammeled as "The Thousand and One Nights." A work of such power and beauty that the word masterpiece is not misplaced.'

No reader of the previous volumes can afford to miss the concluding chapters of Genji's life.

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BLUE TROUSERS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE TALE OF GENJI

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BLUE TROUSERS

BEING THE FOURTH PART OF
"THE TALE OF GENJI"

BY

LADY MURASAKI

TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY
ARTHUR WALEY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1928

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Printed in Great Britain by
Unwin Brothers, Ltd., Woking

TO

R. C. TREVELYAN

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LIST OF MOST IMPORTANT PERSONS

Akashi, Lady of	Brought back by Genji from his place of exile.
Akashi, Princess	Daughter of the above.
Akikonomu	Daughter of Rokujō. Consort of the Emperor Ryōzen.
Aoi	Genji's first wife. Her death is recorded at the end of Vol. I.
Asagao, Princess	Courted in vain by Genji.
Chūjō, Lady	Daughter of Tō no Chūjō. Concubine of the Emperor Ryōzen.
Chūjō no Omoto	Maid in service of Higekuro.
Crown Prince, The	Son of Suzaku. Afterwards ascends the Throne. 'The New Emperor.'
Emperor, The New	See *Crown Prince.*
Falling Flowers	Lady from the Village of. A mild and patient lady, entrusted with Yūgiri's upbringing.
Fujitsubo	Genji's stepmother. Secretly loved by him.
Genji, Prince	The hero.
Higekuro	Husband to Makibashira, who goes mad. Subsequently marries Tamakatsura.
Hyōbukyō, Prince	Murasaki's father.
Jōkyōden, Princess	Consort of Suzaku.
Kaoru	Son of Nyosan and Kashiwagi. Supposed by the world to be Genji's son.
Kashiwagi	Son of Tō no Chūjō. In love with Nyosan.
Kōbai	Kashiwagi's brother.
Kojijū	Maid to Nyosan.
Koremitsu	Genji's favourite retainer.
Koremitsu's Daughter	'The Gosechi dancer.' Yūgiri takes a fancy to her at the time when he cannot get access to Kumoi.
Kumoi	Tō no Chūjō's daughter. Yūgiri's wife.
Makibashira	Higekuro's mad wife.

Moku no Kimi	Maid in service of Higekuro,
Murasaki	Genji's wife. The low rank of her mother prevented her ever being installed as *kita no kata* or 'legitimate spouse.'
Niou	Son of the New Emperor and the Akashi Princess. Genji's grandson.
Nishi no Miya	Murasaki's eldest sister.
Nyosan	Favourite daughter of the ex-Emperor Suzaku. Accepted by Genji as his *kita no kata*, in deference to Suzaku's wishes. Loved by Kashiwagi.
Oborozuki	Consort of Suzaku. Formerly loved by Genji.
Ochiba	Daughter of Suzaku. Married to Kashiwagi; after his death, loved by Yūgiri.
Ōmi, Lady from	Illegitimate daughter of Tō no Chūjō.
Ōmiya, Princess	Tō no Chūjō's mother. Yūgiri's maternal grandmother.
Rokujō, Lady	Loved by Genji in his early days. Violently jealous of his other attendants.
Ryōzen, Emperor	Thought by the world to be the son of the Old Emperor (Genji's father); but in reality son of Genji and the Old Emperor's consort, Lady Fujitsubo.
Saishō	Maid to Tamakatsura.
Sochi, Prince	Genji's half-brother.
Suzaku, Ex-Emperor	Genji's half-brother. Father of Nyosan and Ochiba.
Tamakatsura	Daughter of Tō no Chūjō and Yūgao. Adopted by Genji.
Tō no Chūjō	Genji's great friend. Brother of Genji's first wife, Aoi.
Yamato, Governor of	Nephew of Ochiba's mother.
Yūgao	Loved by Genji in his youth. Withered by Rokujō's jealousy. Dies in the deserted mansion (*see* vol. i, chap. iv).
Yūgiri	Genji's son by Aoi.

SITUATION AT THE BEGINNING OF VOLUME IV

GENJI has decided to find a husband for his ward Tamakatsura, though he longs to keep her for himself. Yūgiri (Genji's son) is still in love with Kumoi (Tō no Chūjō's daughter); but Tō no Chūjō is more ambitious on her behalf, and would like to establish her in the Emperor's Palace. Genji is hurt by this slight upon Yūgiri, and there is an estrangement between Genji and Tō no Chūjō.

BLUE TROUSERS

CHAPTER I

THE ROYAL VISIT

GENJI'S mind was still occupied with the question of Tamakatsura's future. He was, as he put it to himself, exploring various possibilities—honestly endeavouring to discover a plan that would ensure her happiness. But meanwhile the girl's reputation had, true to Murasaki's prediction, already begun to suffer. The fact that rumours connecting Genji's name with hers were now generally current made his situation with regard to her true father more than ever embarrassing. Where other people's conduct was concerned Tō no Chūjō's standards were singularly exacting. The moment he heard that the subject of all this gossip was his own daughter, Chūjō's moral indignation would know no bounds, and he would certainly not consider it any part of his duty to save Genji's face or lighten the consequences of his equivocal behaviour. Was it, Genji now began to ask himself, of any advantage either to the girl or her father that their relationship should be disclosed? Far better, surely, to find her a suitable husband as soon as possible, or best of all, induce the Emperor to admit her into the Palace.

This year the Emperor was to take part in the Ōharano Festival.[1] People came from all over the country to witness the ceremony, and the sightseers included several parties

[1] A religious ceremony which took place in the twelfth month. The Ōharano shrine was situated in the hills to the west of Kyōto.

from the New Palace.[1] The Procession left the Suzaku gate at the hour of the Hare,[2] turning to the right when it reached the Great Highway of the Fifth Ward. All through the town, and beyond it as far as the Katsura river, the road was thickly lined by coaches. The procession was, strictly speaking, an Imperial Progress; but on this occasion the Palanquin was followed by most of the younger princes and noblemen, on horses sumptuously saddled and equipped. Their retainers, also on horseback, were all men of fine stature and appearance, clad in magnificent costumes, so that the general effect was one of extraordinary splendour. All the great Ministers of State were there, from the Ministers of the Right and Left, the Palace Minister and Chancellors downwards. Even the lower officers, including those of the Sixth Rank, were as a special privilege allowed to wear the dove-grey cloak and wine-red tunic. There had been a slight fall of snow, but during the time of the procession the weather was perfect. Such of the courtiers as had been taking part in the recent hunting expeditions were still in their strange falconers' costumes. They were attended by the hawk-trainers drawn from the falconries of the Six Bodyguards. These men, in their rather wild-looking, patterned dresses, quite unfamiliar to most residents of the Capital, attracted a great deal of attention. Though there was much in the proceedings that lay outside the scope of what young ladies are supposed to understand, the mere interest and beauty of the sight brought them to the scene in their thousands, and it was touching to observe how many crazy, tottering conveyances just managed to creak and lumber to the spot in time to see the procession pass. The most fashionable view-point was just before the Bridge of Boats. Here the really smart equipages were seen in greatest abundance;

[1] Genji's palace; [2] 5 a.m.

among them, that of Lady Tamakatsura. It was of course towards the open window of the Emperor's Palanquin that she at once turned a fascinated gaze. Clad in a bright scarlet cloak, he sat motionless, not for an instant turning his young face to right or left. Never in her life had she seen so many handsome faces and fine clothes; but the Emperor could hold his own. She could not help casting a secret glance towards her father as he rode by with the other Ministers. He was a finely built man, and wore an air of vigour and enterprise that marked him out from among all the other commoners in the train. But it was not for long that she diverted her gaze from the scarlet-robed figure in the Palanquin. As for such or such a young prince whose conversation or appearance she had heard praised, this or that chamberlain or courtier who had plied her with love letters—though her friends kept pointing them out, she did not pay the slightest attention, but continued to gaze at the figure in the red cloak, who was not only her Sovereign, but also the handsomest young man in all the throng. In cast of countenance he was, she thought, extraordinarily like Prince Genji, though the august position which he held had given to these same features a sternness, an imperturbable dignity very different from the habitual expression of her guardian's face.

By the lesser figures in the procession she was, she must needs confess, very much disappointed. Used to Genji and Yūgiri, she had fallen into the habit of supposing that beauty was the common property of all well-born gentlemen; and it was with some consternation that she to-day encountered such chins and noses as she could scarcely believe to be varieties of the organs with which she was familiar. She recognized Prince Hyōbukyō[1]; and also her own suitor Prince Higekuro, who, though not usually very particular

[1] Murasaki's father.

about his appearance, was to-day quite smart in his guardsman's dress, with a stylish Persian quiver across his shoulders. He was dark-skinned and very hairy. This disgusted her, though she knew that men cannot be expected to have faces as smooth and complexions as delicately graded as those of a lady fresh from her toilet-table. No doubt she was unreasonable; but she could not help it. Argue with herself as she might, the appearance of such people as Prince Higekuro distressed her. Her thoughts went back to the Emperor. Genji had spoken lately about the possibility of her being summoned to the Palace. She did not want to become the Emperor's concubine. That kind of thing did not appeal to her; moreover she did not think herself sufficiently presentable, and could not imagine that she would ever stand a chance of being chosen for such a purpose. But to be attached to the Palace in some general capacity, and if not actually to enjoy the Emperor's friendship, at any rate often to see him in a far less fleeting manner than she had done to-day—such a notion pleased her, and henceforward her mind frequently dwelt upon it.

At last the procession arrived at Ōharano, the Palanquin halted, and a great banquet was served in the Imperial Tent. While such of the guests as had arrived in Court dress were changing into their cloaks and hunting-jackets, a great hamper of wine and fruit arrived as a present from the New Palace. The Emperor had expressed a wish that Genji should be present at to-day's proceedings; but he had excused himself, saying the day fixed for the ceremony clashed with a religious observance [1] which it was impossible for him to neglect. His majesty, upon the receipt of Genji's hamper, sent a lieutenant of the Guard back to the New Palace with a return present of game—a dozen or so par-

[1] Perhaps the anniversary of Lady Rokujō's death?

tridges strung to the bough of a tree. With it was a prose message of the usual kind, which I will not here reproduce, for the pronouncements of Royalty on such occasions are not necessarily of great interest. The Imperial Poem was as follows: 'The tracks these woodland birds imprinted on the snowy hill would guide you safely on the path that Precedent decrees.' By this he meant that the Grand Minister had never before been absent on the occasion of the Royal Visit.

Genji entertained the messenger with suitable respect, and finally sent him back with the poem: 'So thick this morning's snow that, where I seek my way, no ancient track remains upon the wind-drifts of the desolate hill.' [1] I have, as a matter of fact, heard a good deal more of what took place on this occasion; but there are still several gaps that I have not been able to fill in, and I shall therefore at present say nothing further about it.

Next day Genji wrote a note to Tamakatsura in which he said: 'How did you get on yesterday? Were you able to see the procession properly? I am sure that, if you were, you now take a very different view about my recent proposal. . . .' She was at first amused by the notion that a fleeting glimpse through the window of a palanquin could have altered her decision about serving at the Palace. But after a moment's reflection she realized that this was precisely what had happened. How clever he always was at guessing what went on in other people's heads!

In reply she sent the poem: 'How think you I could have seen the Light of Heaven when snow-clouds dimmed the morning with their sullen breath?' [2] Genji showed

[1] This Royal Visit is so much more splendid than any previous one that precedents do not count. There is a play of words: *mi-yuki* means 'deep snow,' but also 'Royal Visit.'

[2] Again there is a play on the two senses of *mi-yuki*.

the letter to Murasaki, and explained the situation. 'I have been suggesting that she should apply for a post at the Palace,' he said. 'But I am not sure that I could get her accepted. You see, it was from my house that Lady Akikonomu entered the Imperial service, and it might be thought that I was asking too much in trying to establish a second ward of mine in a high position at the Palace. Nothing would be gained if I restored her to her father; for he too has already supplied His Majesty with a consort.[1] It is all very difficult and confusing. . . . The Emperor is extremely attractive. Now that she has seen him, were she only a few years younger and somewhat less diffident about her own powers to please, she would not, I am sure, rest content till she secured a footing in his household. . . .' 'How horrible you think everyone is,' Murasaki answered, laughing. 'Even if she admired the Emperor (and there is no reason to suppose that she did), a girl such as she would never dream of putting herself forward. . . . We women are really far less immodest than you suppose.' 'Possibly,' replied Genji. 'But on the other hand the Emperor is far handsomer than you suppose, as you will admit when you have seen him.'

Another difficulty was now beginning to present itself. So long as she continued to live quietly in the New Palace the question of Tamakatsura's clan-rights was not likely to be raised. She would pass as a member of the Minamoto, Genji's own clan, and be admitted without further scrutiny to the worship of his family gods. But supposing he succeeded in getting her into the Palace or in finding her a husband, it would then be necessary to come into the open about which clan she belonged to. He would, of course, if he intended to pass her off as his own child, have to pretend that she was a Minamoto. If this only meant

[1] Lady Chūjō, Tō no Chūjō's eldest daughter.

depriving the Kasuga Deity [1] of a worshipper, it would not be of much consequence. But there was always the risk that the true facts might one day come to light, and then his own conduct towards those who had accepted her at his hands would appear so discreditable that he would never be able to face them again.

He knew of course that ordinary upper-class people changed over from one clan to another without the slightest compunction ; it was, indeed, rather a fashionable thing to do so. . . .

No, it was no use arguing in this way. Such adoptions did not alter the facts of the case. Tamakatsura was not his child, but Tō no Chūjō's. Sooner or later her father would become aware of this, and that being so it was far better that he should learn the truth from Genji's own lips. He accordingly wrote to Tō no Chūjō, and without giving any explanation asked him to be sponsor [2] for the girl at the long deferred ceremony of her Initiation, which was fixed for the second month of the new year.

The old Princess, Tō no Chūjō's mother, had been very unwell all the winter, and though custom demanded that, if Tō no Chūjō were sponsor, the ceremony should take place in her house, Genji feared that this would be putting her to too much inconvenience. He noticed that Yūgiri, who was constantly with her, looked more and more careworn every day. This was a bad sign ; probably the old lady would not last out many weeks more. But if she died before his intended conversation with Tō no Chūjō had taken place, Tamakatsura would not be able to wear mourning for her, and would thus, through no fault of her

[1] Clan god of the Fujiwaras, the family to which Tō no Chūjō and consequently Tamakatsura belonged.

[2] The sponsor was usually the father ; but also sometimes an uncle, brother-in-law or the like. The Initiation, frequently mentioned in the *Tale*, was a religious ceremony corresponding to our Confirmation.

own, be guilty of a serious offence. Accordingly he set out for the Third Ward, calling first at the old Princess's apartments. He was obliged to act with great secrecy, for he had pleaded only yesterday that a religious obligation confined him to his rooms. But lest she should be disappointed, he robed himself for the visit quite as magnificently as he would have done for the recent Procession. Her joy at the sight of this dazzling spectacle knew no bounds. Ill though she was, she immediately cast away all her troubles, dragged herself from her couch and received him, propped up on an easy chair.

She was evidently very much enfeebled; but she was perfectly well able to carry on a conversation. 'I always know how things are going here by watching Yūgiri,' Genji said to her. 'Lately he has been very absent-minded and depressed, and sometimes I have heard him sighing heavily when he was by himself. I knew this meant that he was worrying about you, and I felt I must come and enquire on my own account. Nowadays I do not even visit at the Palace except on very special occasions. I still hold the position of Grand Minister; but you would not find a single business document on my table. I live shut away in my own house, and am quite out of touch with everything that goes on in the outside world. You probably think it very reprehensible of me to withdraw from all public responsibilities at so early an age; and I know that you could quote to me cases, both ancient and modern, of indomitable old men who have gone on tottering to their government offices every day of their lives till their backs were bent double. If I do not manage to supply the world with so edifying a spectacle, it is partly because I feel myself wholly lacking in capacity for such matters, partly because I am by nature incurably indolent. . . .' 'You're only making excuses because it's a very long time since you

have been to see me,' she answered. 'Well, I haven't been getting on so badly. Till this year I had nothing to complain of, except the usual inconveniences of old age. But now they have not much hope of me. I have been wondering lately whether I should ever see you again. As a matter of fact, I am better than usual to-day, and do not feel at all as though my time were up. I have never thought there was much to be said in favour of dragging on long after all one's friends were dead, and for my part I was ready and anxious to be gone. If I have hung on till now, it has really been chiefly because of Yūgiri's extraordinary kindness and devotion. I can see that the idea of losing me upsets him terribly. . . .' She cried a good deal while she spoke, and her voice was so tremulous that he found it hard to catch her words; but the emotion which lay behind her quavering and often incoherent phrases was always such as he could most easily comprehend and share. In the course of this conversation Genji said: 'I suppose Tō no Chūjō comes to see you several times a day? I should be glad to have a word with him, if he looks in while I am here. There is something I have been wanting to tell him about for a long time. I should be sorry to miss this opportunity; for nowadays we seem very seldom to meet.' 'I don't know how it is,' the old Princess replied; 'it may be that he is very busy, or it may be that he simply does not want to come. I can only tell you that he has not been here once since my illness began. I wonder what sort of thing it is you want to discuss with him? I wish he were not so set against poor Yūgiri. I have said to him ever so many times: "It's no good arguing about how it all began. The harm is done now; they've got themselves talked about, and if you go on keeping them apart, you will only turn every one against you." But once he gets an idea into his head there is no doing anything with him.

He was always the same. . . .' Genji smiled at her assumption that whatever was to be said must necessarily concern her darling Yūgiri. 'I am afraid I was partly to blame,' he said. 'I was led to suppose that Tō no Chūjō did not regard the affair as worth his interference, and took the same line myself. Afterwards, when I discovered how angry he was, I wished I had not meddled in the matter at all.

'However, that is not what I want to talk to him about now. . . . Some while ago I happened quite by chance to discover the whereabouts of a person in whose fate I imagine him to be deeply interested. I ought of course to have spoken to him at once; but there were reasons that made me very reluctant to go into the whole matter. A home had to be found for her immediately, and having a very small family myself, I took her into the New Palace, never intending this to be more than a temporary measure. . . . I was seeing very little of Tō no Chūjō at this time, and month after month went by without my having a chance to discuss the matter with him, as I fully intended to do as soon as an opportunity arose. . . .

'It now appears that the Emperor is looking for a Lady-of-the-Wardrobe. The position has been allowed to remain vacant far too long, the work being entrusted to mere housekeepers and lower servants, with the result that everything is in a state of hopeless confusion. In old days there seemed to be no difficulty in filling the post. All that is required is a lady free from domestic ties, who is also of good birth and tolerable character. But now, quite apart from birth and breeding, it seems impossible to produce any one who even as regards previous conduct and experience is in any way qualified for the position. Having seen several applicants who came with the highest recommendations, the Emperor decided that he must look for some one of quite a different class.

'I at once thought of Lady Tamakatsura, the girl whom I have taken into my house. So far as I can make out, she is just the sort of person his Majesty is looking for. Service at the Palace has, I know, usually been regarded solely as an avenue to Imperial notice and favour, with the result that the work of such offices as the Wardrobe has been treated as something to scramble through with as little effort as possible. But it is not intended that this shall continue, and Lady Tamakatsura seems to me just the right person to put things upon a more sensible footing.

'However, I can do nothing till I have seen her father and talked the matter over with him. I have already asked him to stand sponsor at her Initiation, and now that you are feeling stronger I hope that the ceremony will soon be able to take place at your house.' 'If I understand you rightly,' said the old lady, 'this is some child of Tō no Chūjō's. Your story very much surprises me. He was rather wild in his younger days; but he never failed to make provision for his children, and, indeed, he has in his time collected some very queer waifs and strays who succeeded in convincing him he was their father. I think it is most unaccountable that, if this girl is really his daughter, he should have completely lost touch with her and allowed you to pass her off as your child. What strange things you are telling me! But now I come to think of it, there was some story that I heard years ago. . . .'

'It may sound to you very improbable,' he replied, 'but all that I have told you is true so far as it goes. I shall necessarily be telling Tō no Chūjō a good deal more about it, and you can get the details from him. It is a long and rather sordid story, and you would soon wish I had not begun it. Even Yūgiri still knows nothing, and believes that the girl is my daughter. You will not of course allow the matter to go any further.' So he cautioned

her. Meanwhile Tō no Chūjō heard that Prince Genji was at his mother's house. 'Of course my mother will be delighted,' said he, 'but I wish he had let us know that he was coming. Only Yūgiri is with her. . . . It is most unfortunate. There will be no one to receive him or see to it that his escort is properly entertained.' Much agitated, Tō no Chūjō began routing out such of his own sons and of Genji's particular acquaintance as could be procured at such short notice, and sent them round post-haste to the old lady's apartments, begging them to make sure that the distinguished guest was not being shamefully neglected. 'The wine!' he called after them. 'Be sure that he is offered wine and a little fruit. I would come with you myself, were I not afraid of giving trouble. . . .'

Just then a note from his mother was handed him. 'Genji is here,' she said. 'Of course I was delighted to see him. But I knew well enough that he had not come merely to chatter with me. It now appears that he counted on finding you here. There is something he wants to discuss with you.' It was quite clear what had happened. The Princess, thinking that her end was near, had again been beseeching Genji to champion Yūgiri's cause. 'He himself,' thought Tō no Chūjō, 'is probably tired of seeing the boy moping about day after day with the same love-lorn expression. He no doubt imagines that a word from him, preceded by a little judicious flattery, will suffice to alter all my views. If more is required, there is always the plea that, in her present condition, my mother must at all costs be allowed to have her way. At this moment, I suppose, they are putting their heads together and deciding how to propitiate me . . . under the circumstances it will be very difficult not to give way; and yet I don't at all see why I should!' So he havered, feeling very much irritated by the whole affair, and extremely disinclined to obey the

summons. But he valued civility very highly, and he could not without great rudeness refuse his mother's invitation just on the one occasion when Genji was in the house. It would be better not to put himself in the wrong. . . . It was evident, indeed, that he had decided to go; for he began dressing in his finest clothes, and soon afterwards he set out, with only a handful of outriders, but accompanied by all the gentlemen of his household. The party was an imposing one as it swept along, dominated by the resplendent figure of Tō no Chūjō himself, who was noticeably taller than the rest and broad-chested to match, fulfilling in dignity of mien and gait all that the popular imagination expects of a great political leader. He was magnificently dressed in long trousers of wine-red silk and a lined cloak, white outside and red within, with a very long and sumptuous train. His costume contrasted in the strangest manner with that of Genji, who had changed into a plain cloak of Chinese silk thrown about him with just that touch of negligence which is proper to a great lord on a small occasion. But the contrast, which would have put any one else at a disadvantage, only served to show that Genji at his very shabbiest could hold his own against the most grandiose display of trains and trappings.

The friendship of Tō no Chūjō's sons with Yūgiri made it natural that they should accompany their father on this visit. It happened that Chūjō's two younger brothers, sons of a different mother, holding now the positions of Tutor to the Crown Prince and Representative of the Fujiwara Family on the Grand Council, were also at hand; and though no particular meeting of the Government had been called, circumstances had obliged some ten or twelve of the great officers of State (the Chief Treasurer, the Treasurer of the Fifth Rank, the Colonel of the Bodyguard and others) to foregather in Tō no Chūjō's house that morning. They

too, with a number of squires and commoners, joined the throng, and it was an impressive concourse of courtiers and gentlemen that was now entertained in the old Princess's Reception Hall. The great tankard went round again and again, every one became very much elated, and scenes took place which (as was generally observed) far exceeded in brilliance and gaiety what is usually witnessed in an antiquated dowager's apartments. Genji and Tō no Chūjō were soon engaged in an animated conversation. When they were apart it seemed to each that an exasperating accumulation of small grievances was all that now remained of their ancient alliance. But from the first moment of this unpremeditated and almost accidental meeting all consciousness of these recent jars and irritations utterly vanished. No sooner were they seated side by side than a host of common memories crowded to the mind of each. What miseries they had suffered together, what delights they had enjoyed! It seemed impossible that such trivial incidents as those of the last few months could have sufficed to raise a barrier between them. But so it had been; and for that very reason there was more to talk about now than there could possibly else have been. Enquiries, recollections, allusions followed hard upon one another, and when dusk fell the two friends had still not come to a pause in their conversation. At last Tō no Chūjō remembered that the guest must be in need of refreshment, and handing him the tankard he said: 'It has for a long while past distressed me very much to see so little of you; and I felt that it would indeed mark a disastrous climax in our estrangement if you should come to-day without my being here to receive you. I imagined that, had you not expressly desired to avoid me, you would certainly have told me of your intended visit. Fortunately, however, I decided that to come unwanted would endanger our friendship less than to stay

away when I knew that you were honouring my mother's house. . . .' 'If any one has been endangering our good relations, it is I,' answered Genji. 'Did you but know it, I stand in need of all the charity and forbearance that you can muster.' [1]

Tō no Chūjō was puzzled by this; but he naturally assumed that it referred to the trouble concerning Kumoi and Yūgiri, and certain that something very disagreeable was coming, he waited for Genji to continue. 'In old days it was very seldom that we differed about any matter of importance, whether it concerned our own lives or the affairs of the country, and for this reason I felt perfectly confident in handing over to you the direction of the Government. It seemed as little likely that our views would clash as that a bird's two wings should start flying in different directions. If lately I may seem to you sometimes to have acted in a way at variance with this old concord, you cannot claim that it has been in matters of any wide or general importance. But that is not enough; as I grow older I feel all the more anxious that not even these small domestic difficulties should continue to mar our friendship or in any way alter it from what it was in earlier days. You seemed to avoid me; but I knew from experience that the duties I myself had thrust upon you leave little time for friendship, and had I been merely an acquaintance I should not have been surprised at your becoming somewhat difficult of access. But despite all that had arisen between us our relationship was merely of a somewhat different kind. . . .'

Tō no Chūjō had not the least idea what all this was going to lead up to. 'Certainly we were very intimate at one time,' he answered. 'It is possible that I presumed too much upon our friendship—ignored too completely the

[1] Genji is of course referring to his sequestration of Tamakatsura.

great distance that separated us. You have compared us to the two wings of a bird. Such was never our position. You were always far above me, and if I have risen from insignificance to high rank and office I know quite well that it is entirely your doing. Perhaps I ought more frequently to have acknowledged this obligation; but as one grows older one tends more and more to take things for granted. . . .' Tō no Chūjō, who had arrived in such ill-humour, was now speaking almost apologetically. It was at this point that Genji ventured upon an allusion to the rainy night's conversation,[1] then to Yūgao, and last to Tō no Chūjō's little daughter, Tamakatsura. 'I have news concerning her which will very much surprise you,' Genji said at last, and, without going into the whole story, broke to Tō no Chūjō the news that Yūgao was long ago dead, and that Tamakatsura had for some while been living with him.

Tears sprang to Chūjō's eyes. 'I think that at the time when I first lost sight of her,' he said at last, 'I told you and some of my other friends about my endeavours to trace Yūgao and her child. It would have been better not to speak of the matter; but I was so wretched that I could not contain myself. However, the search brought no result, and at last I gave up all hope. It was only recently, when my accession to high office induced all kinds of odd and undesirable creatures in every quarter to claim relationship with me, that I began to think once more about this true child of mine. How much more gladly would I have acknowledged and welcomed Yūgao's daughter than the band of discreditable and unconvincing claimants who henceforward thronged my gates! But now that I know she is in good hands . . .' Gradually the conversation drifted back to that rainy night and to the theories which

[1] See vol. i, p. 40 seq.

each of them had then put forward. Had life refuted or confirmed them? And so, between tears and laughter, the talk went on, with not a shade of reproach or coolness on either side, till morning was almost come. 'I have no desire to go away,' said Genji, rising at last. 'The things of which we have been speaking happened so long ago that they are already ancient history, and I thought that they no longer much concerned me. But this meeting of ours to-night has brought them back out of the past, and . . .' Perhaps it was partly because he had been drinking (some special reason there must have been, for it was very seldom indeed that he betrayed his emotion), Genji at this point broke down completely and burst into a flood of tears.

Nor was he the only person in the house to weep that night. For the old Princess, seeing Genji so far increased in dignities and power since the time of Aoi's death, could not help picturing to herself the impression that the more consequential Genji of to-day would undoubtedly have made upon her fastidious daughter. A year or two longer, a little more experience on either side, and all might have been well.

The matter of Yūgiri and Kumoi had not been so much as mentioned during Tō no Chūjō's visit. Genji was by no means anxious to start the subject, for he knew that the girl's family considered that he had been remiss in not putting in a word for her at Court, and he felt no inclination to defend himself; while Chūjō, not venturing to embark upon a topic which Genji seemed deliberately to avoid, gave the impression that upon this point he still harboured a grievance. 'I shall not escort you to your palace to-night,' he said to Genji. 'Our joint cavalcades, suddenly let loose upon the sleeping town, would cause an uncomfortable commotion. But next time we meet here we will let it be known in advance that I am going to escort you. . . .'

It now seemed certain that the old Princess would by

the appointed day be sufficiently recovered to allow of the Initiation [1] taking place in her house. 'On that occasion, if not before,' said Genji, 'we may count on meeting again.'

It was noticed by the companions who waited for them that when Genji and Tō no Chūjō at last reappeared they were both smiling with evident satisfaction, as though some difficult negotiation had been successfully arranged between them. What was it all about? With what new powers could Tō no Chūjō have been invested? Many wild guesses were made, nor would it have occurred to any one that politics had not once been mentioned between them.

The news of Tamakatsura's whereabouts came as such a shock to Tō no Chūjō that he was at first quite unable to decide whether he was glad or sorry at what had happened. Only one reason (not referred to by Genji in his account of the affair) could possibly have induced him to adopt the girl. Nothing had been said about restoring her to her real father, and Tō no Chūjō was certain that under the circumstances Genji would make every possible effort to avoid doing so. If he had not openly accepted her as his concubine, it was through fear of Murasaki and the rest. Certainly it was most unfortunate (the real situation being such as Tō no Chūjō guessed) that Genji should have insisted upon spreading this ridiculous report about the girl being his daughter. After all, in the mere fact of his taking a fancy to her there was nothing discreditable either to her or himself, and only this stupid pretence would make the attachment, should it become known, seem in any way reprehensible.

Should Genji decide to escape from his dilemma by presenting Tamakatsura at Court, she might prove (thought Tō no Chūjō) a formidable rival to his eldest daughter, who already had difficulties enough at the Palace. But in any

[1] See above, p. 19.

case, having now resumed his old relations with Genji, he was determined to let no matter of this kind endanger them, and was quite prepared to do whatever Genji seemed to expect of him.

The reconciliation took place early in the second month. The 16th of this month, being the first day of the Higan [1] Festival, seemed particularly favourable for the holding of Tamakatsura's Initiation Ceremony. An inspection of the calendar showed that there would not be another suitable day for a long time, and as the old Princess maintained her improvement, there seemed a good chance that the ceremony would be able to take place at her house on the 16th.

The next time Genji visited his ward he was able to inform her that he had at last arranged the long-promised meeting with her father, and had told him, if not the whole story, at any rate as much of it as it was necessary for him to know. He seemed in the end to have chosen his time so well, and managed the disclosure with so much tact, that she felt no real father could possibly handle her affairs with more judgment and devotion, and she had no desire to change her lot. But all the same it was a weight off her mind to know that Tō no Chūjō had been duly informed of her existence. While he was about it Genji thought that he had better tell Yūgiri too, for it was awkward that he should still imagine the girl to be his sister. The news that she was not Genji's daughter hardly came as a surprise to him, for his father's manner towards her had in the course of the last months continually aroused his suspicion. But when he remembered the glimpse he had caught of her on the morning of the typhoon (he was obliged to admit to himself that he thought her handsomer even

[1] In Sanskrit, Pāramitā. The festival is held in autumn and spring, apparently in Japan only.

than the lady from whom a cruel fate divided him), for a moment he felt that he had been a fool not to guess the truth and use the opportunities that chance had provided. But no sooner had this idea crossed his mind than he rejected it with horror. Could it be that even in thought he had for an instant been disloyal to the love upon which his whole life was founded ?

When the day of the ceremony came round, a messenger arrived from the Sanjō palace bearing presents from the old Princess. There was the usual lacquered box in which to lay the severed lock, and though there had been very little time for preparation, both this and the other presents were of the handsomest kind imaginable. In her letter she said : ' I am not certain that it is proper [1] for me even to write upon such an occasion as this. I should not in any case have been able to witness the proceedings, for I am far too ill to leave my bed ; and if a few presents and a letter from me are unprecedented in such a case, so too is the age which I have now reached, and it is clear that the ordinary rules must not be applied to me. In accordance with surprising and delightful information which I have just received, I long to address you as my grand-daughter, but hesitate to do so except at your express command. . . . " Since son and son-in-law both claim you, a double reason have I to greet you as a long-lost scion of my race." ' [2]

Letter and poem were written in a very aged and trembling hand. Genji was present when the messenger arrived, having come across to Tamakatsura's apartments to make the final arrangements for the ceremony. ' The style to which she was brought up looks to us very quaint and old-fashioned,' he said, inspecting the writing ; ' but

[1] She had taken Buddhist orders, and this was a Shintō occasion.

[2] An ingenious poem in which every word has some allusion to the ceremony in hand. For example *futa* = ' both ' and ' cover of the box ' ; *kakego* = ' hidden child ' and ' nest of boxes, fitting one into the other.'

I have been told that in her day she was considered the best penwoman at Court. One is apt to forget that she is now, poor thing, a very old lady indeed. Look at that line. How terribly her hand shook!' Then, after reading the poem through a second time: 'What ingenuity! There is in the whole poem not a single phrase which has not some special application to to-day's ceremony. It would be difficult to imagine lines in which so little space was wasted,' and he smiled.

Even a man of far less hasty disposition than Tō no Chūjō would, after such a revelation as that which had recently taken place at the old Princess's house, have awaited the day of the Initiation Ceremony with the utmost impatience. It was evident, when the time came, that the proceedings were to be attended with every possible pomp and formality. In fact the whole complexion of the affair only served to convince Tō no Chūjō more firmly than ever that his daughter had from the start been Genji's mistress. In his capacity as Sponsor he was admitted behind her screens at the Hour of the Swine.[1] Over and above the equipment that is customary on such occasions he noticed that her dais was furnished with a magnificence such as he had never witnessed. When the main ritual was ended and food had been served behind the screen, Genji saw to it that the Great Lamp was so disposed as to illumine this corner of the room far more clearly than usual; and it was in a flood of lamplight that father and daughter now met face to face. But merely to see her was not enough; he longed to pour upon her a thousand questions concerning her own childhood and later adventures, concerning her mother's death, and all that had led up to the present extraordinary situation. However, it was clear that for the moment any such conversation was impossible, and he

[1] 9 p.m.

had the strange experience of being called upon to tie the girdle of his daughter's dress without having yet exchanged a single word with her. 'I have not yet publicly announced that you are her father,' whispered Genji, 'so please behave as though you were standing Sponsor to her as my friend.' 'You need not worry about that,' whispered Tō no Chūjō in reply; 'it will be difficult enough under the best of circumstances suddenly to begin addressing her as my daughter, and at the present minute . . .' While the tankard was going round he added: 'I am so overwhelmed by the splendour of to-day's proceedings and the trouble which you have evidently taken to make them a success, that I feel it would be ungrateful of me to ask why I was not taken into your confidence before. But you will admit, I am sure, that it would be strange if I were not somewhat puzzled. . . .' Genji made no reply.

Most of the Royal Princes were waiting in the ante-room, among them several of Tamakatsura's suitors, who were curious to know why the two Ministers were so long in reappearing from behind the screen. Of Tō no Chūjō's sons, only the two eldest, Kashiwagi and Kōbai, had been let into the secret. Their feelings about the matter were necessarily somewhat mixed; for with the disappointment of finding that Tamakatsura was their sister was mingled a feeling of intense relief that their courtship had hitherto remained secret. 'I may tell you,' whispered Kōbai, leaning across to Kashiwagi, 'that I have had a very lucky escape. I was on the point of giving myself away over this. But as it is, I don't think any one knows about it.' 'There's something very odd about Genji,' whispered Kashiwagi in reply. 'This is really the second time that he has adopted a girl apparently because he had himself taken a fancy to her, and has then pressed her into the arms of any one who cared to take her. . . .'

Genji, as a matter of fact, overheard both these remarks, and going to Tō no Chūjō, he said: 'I must beg of you to be very careful for a little while; otherwise both our reputations are likely to suffer. Were we ordinary citizens we should only have our own consciences to satisfy, and if our mutual affairs got into rather a mess it would concern no one but ourselves. Unfortunately, however, we both of us hold positions in which the good opinion of all sorts of people (some of whom judge by standards quite different from ours) is of the greatest importance to us, and can only be disregarded at the risk of disagreeable consequences. It would be fatal, for example, if this situation were suddenly sprung upon the world in all its details. But allowed to leak out piecemeal, it will do very little harm. What matters is that people should have plenty of time to get used to one part of a scandal before the next is allowed to leak out.' 'I had no intention of putting her under your wing,' replied Tō no Chūjō; 'but I must confess that it has worked out very well. In fact, it seems as though she were intended by Fate to be your child rather than mine; you may count upon me to do exactly as you think best.'

Great efforts were made to hush up for a little while longer the true facts concerning Tamakatsura's birth. But talking about other people's affairs is so indispensable an occupation that such efforts are commonly of little avail; and in this case it was not long before every detail was known. Being a great gossip, the Lady from Ōmi was soon in possession of the secret, and one day in Lady Chūjō's room, when Kashiwagi and Kōbai were both present, she screamed out: 'Here's news for you! My father's found another new daughter! What do you think of that? And she's a luckier girl than I am, for before father found her Prince Genji said she was *his* daughter, and made no end of a fuss over her. And listen now, this is the queer

part of it: that girl's mother was no better than mine!' All this was blurted out at her usual high pitch, and without a thought of the effect which she was producing. Lady Chūjō, upon whom these outbursts made a painful impression, did not answer. Kashiwagi thought it his duty to say severely, 'It is quite true that Lady Tamakatsura is our father's child. There were reasons why it was more convenient that she should be brought up by Prince Genji. But it is undesirable that this should be talked about. I cannot understand how you came to hear of it at all; and still more surprised that you should regard it as a piece of news that can be shouted all over the house. However, as I know by experience, several of our gentlewomen are particularly bad at holding their tongues, and one of them might possibly have overheard. . . .' The Lady from Ōmi laughed boisterously: 'Well, I never!' she said. 'What a silly fuss to make! Why, no one talks of anything else! And look here! They say she thinks she's going to be Lady-of-the-Bedchamber. Now listen to me all of you. I wouldn't ever have come to fetch and carry for my sister in these grand rooms and do all the jobs that the rest of you thought yourselves too good for, if I hadn't been told she would put in a word for me when she got the chance. I could be Lady-of-the-Bedchamber to-morrow, yes, so I could, if my sister didn't choose to let a stranger get off with the job.' This outburst provoked peals of laughter. 'I don't know why you should have got it into your head,' said some one at last, 'that if there was a vacancy for the post of Lady-of-the-Bedchamber, the choice should lie between you and Lady Tamakatsura.' 'It's no good your trying to make fun of me,' she shouted angrily. 'I know quite well what it is: you think I'm not fit to live among such grand people as you. And whose fault is it, pray, that I came at all? Master Kashiwagi here thought it was

a very clever thing to take a poor girl away from her village and make a joke of her in this fine house. Yes, you're very grand people, Prime Ministers and I don't know what! I do you reverence. . . .' And with this she retreated to a corner, stepping backwards in mock obeisance.

Kashiwagi surveyed her as she crouched panting in her corner. She was not such a bad-looking creature. But at the present moment, with her face contorted by rage and her eyeballs extended to twice their proper size, she cut so fantastic a figure that he was obliged to agree with her own dictum: it was indeed a mistake on his part ever to have brought her here. He now made vain efforts to calm her, which were seconded by his brother Kōbai, who said: 'It is quite true that our sister Lady Chūjō has a certain influence in such matters, and I am sure she will do her best for you. But you must first calm yourself down a little. At the present you look for all the world like the Sun Goddess,[1] when she "stamped on the hard stones of her courtyard till the chips flew like snow." Be patient a little while longer, and you will find that Lady Chūjō is most anxious to do what she can for you.' 'If you go on like this,' Kashiwagi could not help observing, 'we shall all hope that, like the Sun Goddess, you will end by shutting yourself up in a cave.' At this point he and Kōbai withdrew.

'Your brothers would never dare come here and make fun of me like this unless you put them up to it,' Ōmi now gasped to Lady Chūjō between her tears. But she still did not despair of winning her sister's good graces, and to that end she now flung herself with alacrity into all the odd

[1] When the God Susano-o returned from the Nether World, his sister the Sun Goddess was enraged at his presumption and 'stamped on the stones of her courtyard till the chips flew like snow.' Later on she was so much upset by her brother's conduct that she retired to a cavern and the Earth was plunged in darkness.

jobs which the charwomen and scullery-maids would not touch. She could be seen at any hour of the day running at full speed hither and thither (but generally in the wrong direction) with a zest never equalled in the annals of this ancient house. Whenever she met her sister she called out to her: 'Now you will recommend me, won't you, for that post at Court?' Lady Chūjō resented this continual persecution, but thought it better to make no reply.

The story of Ōmi's misguided aspiration reached Tō no Chūjō's ears and diverted him extremely. He went straight to Lady Chūjō's apartments and called for the Lady of Ōmi to be sent to him. She was not far off, and hearing her own name uttered she at once replied with a loud whoop and came flouncing into the room. 'You seem to have plenty to do nowadays,' he said. 'If you put the same energy into this Palace work that I hear you are asking for, you would certainly be setting a new precedent! But why did you not tell me before that you wanted this place? I have only this moment heard about it.' Her father at any rate was not making fun of her, she said to herself with great satisfaction. 'I did hope you would hear about it,' she answered Tō no Chūjō; 'but Madam my sister or some one else promised me they would tell you, and I thought it was all in safe hands. Indeed, I'd counted on it so, that when I found out this Lady Tamakatsura was after my place and every one seemed to think she'd get it, I felt like the poor tinker who dreamed of millions, and was so put about I didn't know, as the saying goes, whether my hands grew out of my arms or my chest.' There was no denying that she expressed herself with considerable vigour. Tō no Chūjō found it hard to maintain his gravity, but he succeeded in saying at last: 'I wish you had taken me into your confidence. If only I had known that you wanted this post I could have put in for

it before there was any other candidate in the field. Of course Lady Tamakatsura has considerable claims. But I am sure that if I had known in good time I could easily have convinced his Majesty that you were something not to be missed. Even now I dare say it is not too late. You had better make haste and compose your letter of application, and write it out in your best hand. When his Majesty sees that it is full (as no doubt it will be) of conceits from the Long Poems and other such archaic compositions, he will certainly give your case very serious consideration. For he is particularly open to impressions of that sort.' She had not the least idea that she was being made game of by a heartless and facetious parent. 'If that's all I have got to do,' she answered gaily, 'I shall manage famously. I can make Japanese poems one after another; there's no stopping me. I get a bit mixed up about these terms of respect. But if you'll just give me a little help with those, I'll manage to work in something nice about you into the bargain.' So saying she rubbed her hands with delight at the prospect of being allowed to exercise her wonderful powers of composition. The gentlewomen who were in attendance upon Lady Chūjō heard the whole of this conversation, and nearly died of suppressed laughter. Several were afflicted by so terrible a fit of the giggles that they had to be removed from the room. Lady Chūjō herself, so far from being amused, merely went hot and cold all over while this painful exhibition was in progress. Tō no Chūjō insisted upon treating the matter as a joke. 'Whenever I feel at all depressed,' he said to Lady Ōmi, 'I shall come to you for distraction. You are an unfailing source of entertainment.' It was, however, said at Court that Tō no Chūjō was in reality very much distressed by the girl's silliness, and only made a joke of it in order to cover up his disappointment.

CHAPTER II

BLUE TROUSERS

THOUGH both Genji and Tō no Chūjō strongly urged her to accept the post of Lady-of-the-Bedchamber, Tamakatsura still hesitated. The position did not necessarily imply that she would have personal contact with the Emperor or be in any way under his protection. But since so many people (even her supposed 'father') seemed to find her interesting, she now assumed, without any very good reason for doing so, that the Emperor too would doubtless become attached to her, and she foresaw endless conflicts of the most disagreeable kind with both Akikonomu and Lady Chūjō, not to mention other minor favourites. Her own rapid rise to fame and the deference with which she, a mere foundling from the hedgeside, was treated by both the Chief Ministers, had inevitably aroused hostility in many quarters; among her female acquaintances there were many (she was sure) who regarded her as a pampered upstart, and would with the greatest pleasure in the world have seen her placed in a painful and undignified position. She was old enough to be fully aware of the disadvantages and dangers of every course which lay open to her, and though she concealed her troubles from those about her, she was during all this time in a condition of great depression and perplexity.

Many people would not have regarded her present situation as anything to be complained of. Genji's behaviour towards her was still beyond reproach, and in many respects her life at the New Palace was obviously a very enviable one. But she felt that their relation was equivocal, the subject for months past of many jests and speculations. She

was occupying a position which was in its essence utterly distasteful to her, and longed to clear herself finally of the suspicions which were bound to hang over her as long as she stayed under this roof.

Tō no Chūjō, anxious to remain on good terms with Genji, and certain that, whatever might be his friend's professions, he could not really wish to part with the girl, made no effort to remove her from her present quarters or in any way assert his parental authority.

The extraordinary position which she occupied, thus hung as it were precariously between two rival parents, naturally caused her name and story to become more than ever notorious in the City; and to make matters worse, just at the moment when all eyes were turned upon her, Genji began once more, as the summer drew on, to be far less discreet in his behaviour; as though, having heroically discharged his duty by informing her father of her whereabouts, he were exempt from any further obligation to play a sober and paternal part. How she longed at this time for some female confidant, mother or sister, with whom she could discuss even some small part of the difficulties which now beset her! Unfortunately, her most frequent visitors during all these months were Genji and Tō no Chūjō, precisely the two persons in whom it was least possible that she should confide.

Tamakatsura's mourning [1] was now over; but until the end of the month,[2] there could be no question of her formal affiancement. The Emperor was impatient to get the matter settled, and her various lovers pressed their claims more vehemently than ever upon those whom they imagined

[1] For the old Princess, Tō no Chūjō's mother, and consequently her grandmother, whose death is here assumed, though not actually referred to till three chapters later. The blue trousers, after which the chapter is named, were worn in sign of mourning.

[2] The ninth month, in which no marriages could be celebrated.

to be responsible for her decision. But in whatever quarter they applied, the answer was the same: nothing could be done until the tenth month had begun.

Her new brothers [1] received no encouragement to visit her. But it would be their business to look after her affairs should she take service at Court, and they were anxious to discuss with her several matters in connection with this. Kashiwagi had been much attracted by Genji's daughter. The rapidity with which he had adjusted himself to the new situation caused a good deal of amusement. This embarrassed him, and it was only at his father's request that he visited the New Palace. Outwardly, there was no change in the manner of his reception. When he first arrived, announcing that he had a message to deliver, he was left waiting in the garden, and as he had been instructed to perform his commission secretly, he was obliged to hide in the shadow of a laurel-tree, for a bright moon was shining. Having protested that his message was of a very private nature, he was at last allowed to address Tamakatsura through the curtains of the southern window. But in her nervousness she did not feel capable of speaking to him herself, and her replies were made through her maid Saishō. 'When my father chose me to deliver this message, I am sure he took for granted that you would do me the honour of replying to it with your own lips. The matter will require a certain amount of further discussion, and I fear we shall find this roundabout method very inconvenient. Even though you do not consider me worth putting yourself out for in the usual way, you must remember that we are now recognized to be children of the same father. I may be old-fashioned, but I came here hoping that a brother counted with you for a good deal. . . .'

She felt that she must make some concrete excuse, and

[1] Kashiwagi, Kōbai, and Tō no Chūjō's other sons.

said to her maid : ' Tell him that I should very much like to thank him for all his kindness to me during the last year or so ; but unfortunately I am feeling very unwell and cannot leave my couch. I should not feel justified in treating him with such informality but for the family tie which now unites us.' This, repeated to him by the maid Saishō, sounded very stiff and unaccommodating. ' If your mistress is unwell,' he said, ' would it not be better if I came and stood at her bedside ? The matter is an important one, and I do not at present feel as though I were getting into touch with her at all. But I will not insist . . .' and he began in a low voice to read out his father's message. Kashiwagi was as well turned-out as any prince at Court, and the maid by no means regretted her mistress's obduracy. ' I have heard nothing more from you ' (the message ran) ' about our Palace project. It is high time that a decision were reached, and I should like to have another talk with you. But I think that, for obvious reasons, it is better for me to keep away at present. There can, however, be no objection to your sending me an occasional note, and your complete silence is somewhat perplexing.' ' Tell your mistress,' Kashiwagi added on his own account, ' that however distasteful to her my conversation may in the past have been, it cannot in our altered circumstances be of a nature to cause her the slightest offence. I am still at a loss to know why my previous advances, made in ignorance of our true relation, were so coldly and unfeelingly rejected. Still less do I understand why now, when I can no longer be suspected of coming as a lover, she should insist upon putting the whole breadth of her apartments between us. Never again shall I consent to be treated in this way. Polite society, please point out to her, will have to change a great deal before such discourtesy is tolerated. . . .'

How was she to pacify him ? ' The change in our relationship is not generally known,' she said in her reply ; ' moreover, I do not think that having left me to rusticate for so many years amid the savagery of Tsukushi, your family ought to expect of me the last refinements of urban demeanour.' So she rallied him, and with complete success.

' Forgive me for intruding,' said the maid, ' but I think Madam's difficulty to-day has been that she did not know whether you came as a suitor or a brother. She is extremely sensitive to what is thought of her by the world at large ; that, I am sure, is the only reason she did not come and converse with you at close quarters. But such behaviour is quite unlike her, and you will find that next time you come. . . .' ' No, thank you,' he cried ; ' I fancy I might have to come a great many times and sit here a very long while before your mistress would own that my service had redeemed me from her ban.' So saying, he left the house.

Prince Higekuro served in the same Guard Regiment as Yūgiri, and was continually seeking him out in order to have long and emotional conversations about Tamakatsura. He always hoped that Yūgiri would plead his cause with Genji. A more suitable husband for her than himself could not, Higekuro felt sure, possibly be imagined. He was amiable, good-looking, qualified by rank and birth to secure for her at Court a far higher place than that to which she had any right to aspire. What more could Genji want ? But, as Yūgiri pointed out, the main difficulty was that, as things now stood, she was in a few months' time to take service in the Palace ; this was Genji's idea, and Tō no Chūjō, convinced that it was part of some subtle plan, did not think it wise to interfere.

Prince Higekuro was the elder brother of the ex-Emperor Suzaku's Consort, Lady Jōkyōden. With the exception of

Genji and Tō no Chūjō, he was by far the most influential man in the country. He was now about thirty-two or three. His wife, an elder sister of Murasaki, was four years his senior. In many cases such a disparity of age would not much have mattered; but Lady Makibashira [1] seemed far older than her actual years. He nicknamed her 'granny,' and in this there was something more than a jest, for soon her old-maidish ways began to annoy him, and they had not been together many months before he was wondering how long he should be able to go on enduring her society.

It was the existence of this unfortunate entanglement that had discouraged Genji from furthering Prince Higekuro's suit. The Prince had not, indeed, by any means the reputation of leading a disorderly or even frivolous existence. True, he was seldom at home; but apart from his courtship of Tamakatsura herself, his time seemed to be devoted entirely to practical affairs. Having heard that Tō no Chūjō thought well of him and also that the lady herself was by no means anxious for a career at the Palace, Higekuro, who had almost lost hope, again plucked up heart. Genji, he admitted to himself, was evidently against him. But every one knew why Genji was so reluctant to part with her.

One morning in the ninth month, when the whole world lay glittering in the first frost of the year, messenger after messenger began to arrive with the usual fancifully decked and folded love-letters. Tamakatsura refused even to look at them, and only reluctantly consented to hear them read aloud.

From Higekuro came a note in which he said: 'The

[1] Not named in the book. But in English she needs a name. Makibashira is the name of her little girl, who appears so seldom as not to need one, so I have used this name for the mother.

changing skies tell me that the time of my respite [1] is almost spent. "Lived I in hope, so were this Month of Fasting my despair; but being what I am, I hang my life upon the weak thread of its dwindling days." ' He seemed to assume that a decision had been reached and would irretrievably take effect at the beginning of the next month. She herself knew nothing of this.

Another suitor, Prince Sochi, was equally despondent: 'Why am I writing?' he said in his letter. 'I have lost you, and there is no more to be said. But "Though you be standing in the radiance of the Morning Sun, perchance one drop of dew may linger of those your sleeve once gathered in shadowy garden walks." Did I but think you knew how much it costs me to lose you, I should derive some trifling comfort. . . .' The note containing this poem was attached to an ice-cold spray of bamboo, plucked from near the ground and carried with such care that it was still thickly covered with hoar-frost. The messenger was on this, as upon every occasion, a person whose quality matched the elegance of the letter.

Yet another suitor, whose communications were of the most pressing nature, was Prince Hyōbukyō's son, Sahyōye. Being Murasaki's brother, he was constantly at her apartments, and his present despondency seemed to prove that, according to the information to be gathered in that quarter, Lady Tamakatsura's fate was already decided. His messenger now brought a letter in which Sahyōye said: 'Even though I should at last forget you, how oh how shall I learn to support the dreariness of a life into which no thought of you may find its way? . . .' And so on.

These letters were a source of great interest and pleasure

[1] The ninth month, during which no such step as the affiancement of Tamakatsura or her presentation at Court could take place. See above, p. 41.

to Tamakatsura's gentlewomen, who discussed with unfailing relish the colour of the paper, the style of penmanship, the various kinds of scent with which the letter was perfumed, and many kindred questions. 'I hope Madam will not make up her mind for a long while to come,' said one of them. 'We shall be bored to death when this is all over.'

Her reply to Prince Sochi was short and vague, but not altogether discouraging; for in her poem she said: 'The sunflower, that seems so willingly of its own nature to turn towards the Light of Day, would fain enough (who knows?) have kept the bright frost glittering on its leaves.' This could be interpreted in several ways; but Prince Sochi was very agreeably surprised by even so faint a flicker of regret. That in entering the Palace she was acting against her own will and judgment he did not at all believe, and he could only regard her reply as a sign of well-bred gratitude for his patient courtship; yet it gave him a considerable degree of pleasure.

In the course of the morning love-lorn communications arrived from a number of less distinguished suitors. For most of them she had no special feeling one way or the other, and dealt with each of these protestations as her guardians informed her that the position of the writer required. She showed indeed throughout the whole business (as both Genji and Tō no Chūjō were forced to admit) a good sense and docility that other members of her sex might have done well to imitate.

CHAPTER III

MAKIBASHIRA

'I AM very much perturbed by what you have just told me,' said Genji to Prince Higekuro some months later. 'It will very likely upset all my plans. I hope you are not telling every one about it. . . .' That is precisely what Higekuro *was* doing; the temptation to brag of such a success was one indeed which he could hardly be expected to resist. Some time had now elapsed since the episode to which Genji referred. Tamakatsura had then yielded less to his importunity than to a feeling that this man, from whose touch she still shrank with horror, was not so much a lover as an instrument of Fate, no more to be avoided than were those other strokes of destiny that had pursued her so relentlessly since her earliest years. He hoped at first that she would grow used to him, and pretended not to notice her depression. But as time went on matters only became worse, and Higekuro was already beginning to regard the situation as hopeless, when it became clear that she was with child. This gave him fresh courage; he felt that Heaven had set its seal upon their union, and determined to bear with patience her present wayward humour. For the mere sight of her beauty gave him an increasing pleasure, and the thought that he had still no hold upon her and might any day wake to find that she had fled from him to the Emperor's Palace, perhaps even into his Majesty's arms, was more than he could bear. He attributed his momentary success quite as much to the astuteness of Ben no Omoto [1] as to the compassion

[1] One of Tamakatsura's maids.

of the Ishiyama Buddha, to whom his prayers had for long been addressed. But his human ally was now in deep disgrace for the part she had played in the affair and was at present a prisoner in the servants' rooms. 'Though all the blame falls upon me,' thought this unfortunate creature, 'it is clear that the Blessed Buddha is really responsible. For I have played the go-between without a grain of success for a score or so of my mistress's lovers; and if I did better this time it was only because the Buddha of Ishiyama knows an honest gentleman when he sees one. . . .'

Genji would have given worlds that this thing should not have happened; but both he and Tō no Chūjō had encouraged Higekuro's suit, and though they had every right to complain of the unfortunate manner in which he had urged it, it was now too late to scold him or send him about his business. Indeed, if the girl's reputation were to be saved, the only possible course was to treat Higekuro as an approved and accepted lover; and henceforward on his visits to the New Palace he was openly received with every mark of consideration and respect. Higekuro for his part was anxious to go through the necessary formalities and establish the young bride in his own palace at the earliest possible moment. But Genji was determined that this should not take place if there was any chance that the girl's reception there would in any quarter be an unfavourable one. Such at least was the pretext which he used for delaying Tamakatsura's departure. 'Do, I beg of you, make sure,' he said to her father, 'that she is not suddenly plunged into scenes of jealousy and intrigue. Anything in the shape of scandal or bickering would be extremely painful to her.' 'On the contrary,' said Tō no Chūjō, 'I should be much more uneasy if she were going to the Palace, which I imagine to be now out

of the question. His Majesty has an undoubted partiality for her; and any one in that position, unless backed up by the most powerful family connections, is apt to have a very disagreeable time. I should certainly do all I could for her. But you see for yourself what difficulties I am having over Lady Chūjō's Palace career. . . .' There was much truth in this. The Emperor had himself suggested her application for the vacant post. But his interest in her, if it existed at all, was based only on one brief glimpse, and so casual an approbation by no means implied that he would protect her with the full weight of Imperial authority against the contemptuous hostility of her rivals.

In the formal letter of committal sent by Tō no Chūjō to the husband on the third day after the wedding, he purposely laid great stress on the part played by Genji in her upbringing, expressing in the warmest terms his gratitude for her foster-father's unceasing care and kindness; for he was certain that the content of the letter would end by reaching Genji's ears. The marriage was of course concluded with the utmost secrecy; but the news of it was too interesting a piece of gossip to remain long concealed. It was whispered, in strictest confidence, from ear to ear; before long it had reached the Palace, and was finally recounted to the Emperor himself.

He was very nice about it. 'I am extremely sorry that we are to lose her,' he said. 'But of course, if her thoughts have been occupied elsewhere, that quite explains her long hesitation. . . . I can easily understand that at such a moment as this she would not be willing to take up permanent duties at Court. But if she cares to assist us occasionally. . . .'

It was now the eleventh month. Tamakatsura had agreed to discharge the functions of Lady-of-the-Bedchamber from her apartments in Genji's palace. It was a time of

year when a great many religious ceremonies take place at Court, and the new Lady-of-the-Bedchamber had not a moment's leisure. Her subordinates were continually coming over from the Palace to ask her advice, and her rooms were full of bustle and youthful chatter. Much to her annoyance, Prince Higekuro was no longer content to pay long evening visits, but had now installed himself permanently in her quarters. Prince Sochi and the other suitors, who were still unaware that a secret wedding had taken place, were naturally indignant at the liberties which they saw accorded to their rival. One of them, indeed, had a double reason for annoyance. This was Sahyōye, the brother of Lady Makibashira. Not only was his own suit ignominiously unsuccessful, but his sister was being made publicly ridiculous by the continued presence of her husband in another woman's house. The young man was furious, but at present saw no means of bringing his brother-in-law [1] to book.

The situation was really rather comic. Higekuro had for years past been held up as a model of regularity, industry, sobriety; and now his hectic courtship, with its secret journeyings at dead of night and break of dawn, was the talk of half the Court. Romantic touches were added to the story, and in the end it really seemed to Higekuro's astonished friends that he must have undergone some mysterious transformation. Tamakatsura, too, was by nature sociable, good-humoured and full of high spirits; but in Higekuro's presence her whole being underwent a profound change: she became gloomy, irritable, sharp-tempered, to a degree that must have made it sufficiently apparent to every one that she did not care in the least for him. But she constantly wondered whether Genji thought that she was really enjoying herself with this

[1] Prince Higekuro.

repulsive man, and blushed at the low opinion he must now have formed of her taste. She remembered too Prince Sochi's attractive warmth and liveliness of disposition. What could have possessed her? . . . And she became more disagreeable to Higekuro than ever.

Genji was much relieved at having put an end once and for all to a situation which had involved him in much unpleasant suspicion. Feelings beyond his control might sometimes lead him into odd and equivocal positions, but (Genji assured himself) his natural tendency was to shrink from such entanglements. He was with Murasaki when these reflections passed through his mind, and said to her suddenly: 'Do you remember how suspicious you were when Tamakatsura first came to us? You see now that there was no reason for your alarm. . . .' Yes, he could at last be certain that he was quite safe. Even if circumstances should bring them together again and some part of their former intimacy revive, there would never be the same danger as before. . . . And he began to recall the time when he was most in love with her, when he had even persuaded himself that he could find a way of keeping her for his own. But stay! Had things changed so much after all? Could the thought of parting with her ever have been more painful to him than at this very minute it was? Henceforward the image of Tamakatsura haunted his mind more constantly than ever.

One morning, hearing that Prince Higekuro had for a short while quitted her apartments, Genji once more paid her a visit. He found her looking extremely depressed and unwell. He was told that for some time past she had seemed incapable of making the slightest exertion. But his arrival seemed to give her a little strength, for she raised herself on her couch and had her screens drawn partly back. Genji was careful to behave with the utmost

restraint, and for some while they conversed rather stiffly about the general news of the day. What a relief it was to be in the company of some one really good-looking, after such a long spell of Higekuro's society! Her husband, it was true, had a straightforward, well-meaning sort of face, but how commonplace, how ordinary! She felt bitterly ashamed at the choice that Genji and the world at large must be thinking her to have made, and the tears welled into her eyes. Gradually their conversation became less strained, he moved to a low stool which he drew up quite close to her couch. She was much thinner in the face than when he last saw her, but this showed her features to even better advantage, and the prospect of losing her entirely was unendurably painful to him.

'Though when I stooped I drew no draught, yet never thought I that at the Shallows of the Stream of Death another would stretch out his hand to claim what I had lost.'[1] He looked at her more tenderly than she could bear. She hid her face, murmuring as she did so the lines: 'Long ere he guide me across the Shallows of Death's Stream, may my life, a foam-fleck on the Waters of Trouble, have vanished quite away.' 'Come,' he said smiling, 'the River has got to be crossed; we cannot escape it by "vanishing." However, I promise you I will be there too to hold your other hand. But let us be serious. You know, I am sure, how wretched I am at what has happened. Clearly, when I struggled as I did to overcome my feelings for you, it was not that you might be free to yield yourself in this rash way to one who, after all, cares far less for you than I did. It seems to me now incredible that I should ever have placed such confidence in his discretion; but who could foresee . . . ?'

[1] The soul of a woman is helped across the Stream of Death by the spectre of her first lover.

He saw that the whole matter was too painful for her to discuss; and to change the subject he continued hastily: 'The Emperor is very much disappointed that you have not once been seen at Court. How would it be if you were to stay at the Palace for a little while after you leave us? It will not be so easy for you to get away, once you have settled in your new home. The Emperor will in any case think that I have behaved in a very inconsistent way. But I am glad to say your father is quite satisfied at what has happened. . . .' So he spoke, trying to distract her by such comfortable considerations as occurred to him. But it was all of no avail, and she was soon hopelessly involved in tears. He was aghast to discover into what depths of misery her own inexplicable act had plunged her; but it was clear that sympathy could not help her, and in as sensible and dispassionate a tone as he could muster he began to give her advice concerning her immediate future, insisting above all that, as things were,[1] there could be no question of her living at Higekuro's house.

Prince Higekuro himself was at first very adverse to the idea of her going to the Palace at all. But in the end he saw that it would be easier to move her thence to his own palace than to snatch her straight from Genji's hands, and he at last consented to her spending a few weeks at Court.

His present mode of existence, stowed away in a corner of Tamakatsura's apartments, was very cramped and inconvenient; but even should he persuade her to return with him to his own palace, much required to be done before he could house her with even tolerable comfort. In the last year he had allowed everything to go to ruin, and there was hardly a corner in the whole building that

[1] While Makibashira, Higekuro's mad wife, was still there.

did not urgently need repairs. For many months he had ceased to make any enquiry concerning his wife's present condition of mind, and even his children, of whom he had always been particularly fond, seemed no longer to interest him. But he was at bottom a kind-hearted and even rather sentimental man ; he realized in a vague and general way that this refurnishing of the house in honour of another woman's arrival was probably rather painful to her, and he did his best to spare her any unnecessary inconvenience or humiliation. But his thoughts were all the time so entirely occupied with other things that his precautions were not in the least successful ; indeed, everything seemed to happen in the way most calculated to wound her susceptibilities.

Lady Makibashira had not been brought up in a way to prepare her for servility or self-effacement. The daughter of a Royal Prince, and herself not lacking (at least in girlhood) either charm or good looks, she had been universally flattered and applauded. But in recent years a change had come over her ; she had been subject to some strange possession or spiritual disorder. Her behaviour became more and more peculiar, and at times she seemed barely conscious of what was going on around her. For these and other reasons there had for a long time past been no question of Higekuro living with her as a wife in the ordinary sense of the word. But he continued to treat her in the way that her rank demanded, and nothing had occurred till now which could suggest to the world at large that she did not occupy the foremost place in his affections.

News of these preparations for Tamakatsura's arrival reached Prince Hyōbukyō's ears : ' So it has come to this ! ' he said with a sigh. ' I hear she is extremely handsome and intelligent. No doubt he will make arrangements to keep her out of sight ; but once this girl gets a foothold in the house, my daughter's position will become such as

no woman of her quality should be called upon to endure. I shall at once take steps to protect her from this humiliation; if Higekuro cannot be brought to reason, she must leave his house immediately. After all, so long as I am alive, she will not lack a home . . .' ; and he began setting to rights an unoccupied wing in his own palace.

But Lady Makibashira had been a married woman for many years. Though Prince Hyōbukyō was her father, she had long since ceased to think of his palace as her ' home,' and so far from reassuring her, the news that he intended her to come back to him completely overwhelmed her already distracted brain. She became first desperately violent and irrational, and then for days on end lay stretched out motionless upon her bed in a state of complete exhaustion.

She was by nature very quiet and even-tempered, seeming at times more like a child on its best behaviour than a full-grown woman. But for some while past she had suffered from sudden attacks, during which she played upon those about her the most unaccountable and repulsive tricks. Lately she had allowed no one to come near her, and her room had fallen into an indescribable state of filth and disorder. Such a scene would have at any time disgusted Prince Higekuro, to whom the least sign of slovenliness was an unforgivable offence. But coming as he now did straight from Tamakatsura's scrupulously clean and well-ordered apartments, he was appalled at the slatternly scene that lay before him.

But he had shared his life with her for year upon year, and even now pity soon prevailed over disgust. She seemed to know him and be quite capable of carrying on a conversation. After a while he said: ' It is obvious, is it not, that the relation between two people cannot go on being always exactly the same. But it is only among

savages or quite uneducated persons that this leads to wranglings and altercations. People of our sort know how to control themselves, show a reasonable amount of forbearance so long as they choose to put up with the situation ; and when there is obviously nothing to be gained by holding out any longer, they part good-humouredly. You, on the contrary, have worked yourself up into such a state over this business that you are quite ill, and though I have wanted to talk things over with you, I did not know whether you were in a fit state to take part in such a conversation. Not that there is anything new to say. We agreed about all this some time ago. For a long while after you first began to suffer from these attacks I waited patiently and was careful to do nothing that might distress you. But you always admitted that I could not be expected to wait for ever ; sooner or later some one fresh would have to be called in to manage the household. Well, that's what is now going to happen ; you must try not to be cross with me about it. Quite apart from my affection for you, if it were only for our little people's sake, you may be quite sure I should never ill-treat or neglect you. This continual state of grievance and jealousy in which you now live is simply due to your abandoning yourself unresistingly, morbidly to wild dreams and imaginings. I can quite understand that while all this was still undecided you passed through a very anxious and agitated time. But now everything is settled, and you must make up your mind to give the new arrangements a trial before you decide that you are being treated unkindly. I hear that your father is full of indignation at my alleged barbarity, and intends to remove you to his own house. Do you think he really means anything by it, or is it only a threat by which he hopes to bring me to my senses ? ' He laughed as he said this, but in reply she only stared at him with

an expression of reproach and anguish. Even Higekuro's personal servants, the maids Moku no Kimi and Chūjō no Omoto, were against him in this matter, and expressed loud indignation at the prospect of Tamakatsura's arrival.

One day when Makibashira, apparently better than she had been for some time, lay quietly weeping, she suddenly said to Chūjō no Omoto : ' If he told me straight out that he is ashamed of me because I look so old and do odd things, I should not mind. But I cannot bear his dragging in my father's name. He would not dare say such things to my father's face, and if they were to get round . . . What he says to me does not much matter. I have heard it all before, and it does me no harm to hear it again. But my father . . .' At this moment Prince Higekuro entered. She quickly turned on the couch so that her face was hidden from him. She was very lightly built, and emaciated as she now was by months of constant illness, she presented as she lay there a spectacle of almost unconceivable fragility. Her hair was long and fine ; but it had lately been falling out rapidly, and had in places become very thin. It was now in a hopeless tangle and pitiably dedraggled with tears. She could never have been very strikingly handsome, but there was enough of her father in her to give her face great distinction and charm, which, however, in her present uncared-for and haggard condition, had not much chance to take effect.

' What is this you are saying about your father ? ' asked Higekuro as he entered. ' You will make terrible mischief between us, if you put it about that I speak slightingly of him. Besides, it is quite untrue. . . .' Then more kindly : ' I have never felt at my ease in that magnificent palace of Prince Genji's, and should not care to stay there for long at a time. But I am determined to go on seeing the lady whom I have just been visiting, and as I am not

suited either by age or temperament to these perpetual runnings to and fro, I have arranged for her to come and live with us here. This will certainly be much pleasanter for her and me; and, I think, for you too. The fact that she is at such a distance and in so closely scrutinized a place makes the whole affair far more conspicuous than it need be. Prince Genji, as you know well enough, is a very important person; he has made himself responsible for this lady's happiness, and if he hears that you are being unkind to her, he will be very angry both with you and with me. So please be as nice to her as you can. . . . But of course if you feel you would rather go and live with Prince Hyōbukyō for a little while, by all means do so. I promise to come and see you frequently. But in either case you need not be afraid that I shall cease to care for you and look after you. I wish I could be as sure that you, on your side, will begin to take things a little more quietly and sensibly. You do not realize, I am sure, that all this outcry (which presumably you would not make unless you were fond of me) is doing me a great deal of harm. For years past I have done all that was in my power to make you happy, and you may rest assured that I shall continue to do so. . . .' He tried to soothe her, speaking somewhat as he would have spoken to a cross child. 'There is no need for you to tell me about your love affairs,' she answered. 'I am not interested in them. You know quite well what is worrying me. My father has been terribly upset by my illness ever since it began. What the effect upon him would be if I were to go home in my present condition, I dread to think. It distresses him immeasurably to see me suffer. . . . I cannot do it. . . . My father says that, after all, Lady Murasaki is my own sister, and it is very wrong of her to spoil my happiness by introducing you to this girl. But I do not at all agree

with him. Let her introduce you to any one she likes. It is no affair of mine. . . .'

She spoke quite calmly and sensibly. But Higekuro had seen her in this mood before, and knew only too well that it might at any moment terminate in an outburst of the wildest irrationality. 'You are quite mistaken about Lady Murasaki,' he said. 'She had no hand whatever in this. She lives locked away in her bower like an Enchanted Princess in a fairy-story, and would never dream of interfering in the affairs of persons such as you or me. She regards us all, I can assure you, with complete contempt. Certainly nothing would distress her more than that it should be thought she had tried to interest me in Lady Tamakatsura. Please do not spread such a report; it might do a great deal of harm.'

He stayed chatting with her all the afternoon. By dusk his attention had already begun to wander, and he was conscious that his replies were often somewhat at random. For he was trying to decide whether he could contrive, without too much hurting her feelings, not to spend the whole of the evening in her society. Just as he was about to rise, a violent snowstorm began. To insist upon leaving at such a moment would have shown with too painful a clearness how anxious he was to escape from her company. Had she spoken one word of complaint or showed the slightest sign of ill-humour, it would have been easy enough for him to flare up on his side and so escape from his predicament. But she had, on the contrary, been a marvel of tolerance, reasonableness and amiability. It seemed too cruel to leave her, but he had not yet quite made up his mind, and stood with his hand on the door, staring out into the dusk. 'I am afraid it is going to be a very heavy storm,' she said, watching him. 'You will never find your way. It has suddenly grown quite dark. . . .'

Suddenly her expression changed. He knew exactly what was passing in her mind. 'That is all over now,' she was thinking. 'If he does stay, what will be the use? . . . ' 'I will wait till it clears a little,' he said to her. And later: 'Another time I shall be able to stay here as long as you like. But to-night there are reasons. . . . It might be misunderstood. . . . Both Genji and Tō no Chūjō particularly desired that I should not miss. . . . But there is no need to explain. You are so good and patient that I am sure you will forgive me. To-night will be the last time. When Lady Tamakatsura is living here everything will be easier. . . . But really, you are so much better to-night that there seems no reason to have any one else in the house at all.' 'I know you would not really like to stay here to-night,' she said gently. 'I shall be happier if you go. So long as I know you are thinking kindly of me I do not mind where you go. I promise not to cry any more. Look! My sleeve is almost dry. . . .'

Then she sent for her incense-burner, poured in fresh perfumes one upon another, and with her own hands scented his great riding-cloak from tip to toe. Her own dress was of a soft yielding stuff, and as she bent over her work, this dress fell in loose folds that gave her figure a homely, useful air. But how thin, how frail she had grown! She seemed like some pale phantom flickering across the winter night. Her eyes were swollen with weeping, yet her face, he thought, was beautiful. He felt a sudden tenderness towards her. She had never been to blame. Ought he not to have waited months, years if need be, before he inflicted this terrible suffering upon her? For he knew in that moment all that she had suffered since his dereliction of her began. But in the midst of his remorse the image of Tamakatsura rose up before him, and sighing deeply he began to put on his cloak, perfuming it once more with a miniature brazier

that he held for a moment inside each sleeve. He was not as handsome as Genji, but he was magnificently built; and as he stood there handling his great riding-coat he looked a man not lightly to be trifled with. One of his retainers remarked loud enough to be heard, though not speaking directly to the Prince, that it had 'almost stopped snowing and was getting very late.' The maids Chūjō no Omoto and Moku no Kimi were lying on a couch in the corner telling one another dismal stories and sighing 'What a sad world it is to be sure!' at regular intervals. Makibashira herself was lying calm and still at Higekuro's feet, her head resting on a low stool. Suddenly she leapt up, seized a large brazier that was used for drying damp clothes, and coming up from behind, emptied it over his head.

The thing was done in a moment; so swiftly indeed that Higekuro had no idea what had happened. He only knew that suddenly his eyes and nostrils were full of fine, penetrating dust. Blind, choking, and still but dimly aware of what had happened to him, he found himself shaking ashes out of his coat, his breeches, his shirt, his hair. Her ladies stood by terror-stricken. Would he understand that this was one of her fits, one of those strange accesses of perversity in which her frenzy drove her to play the most revolting tricks precisely on those whom she most wished to please? If he thought that she had acted deliberately, was in possession of her senses when she played this odious prank, it was inconceivable that he would ever come near her again. They pressed round, dusting him, sponging him, offering him fresh clothes; but nothing took away this dry, gritty sensation that pervaded his whole person, so that he still felt as though he were smeared with ashes to the very roots of his thick, stubborn hair.

He could not present himself at Tamakatsura's immaculate

apartments in this condition, and dismissing his followers, he prepared to settle in for the night.

Makibashira was now in her gentlewomen's hands. He knew that it was impossible to hold her responsible for what she had done. Yet the look of complete unconcern with which she surveyed the havoc she had just created stung him to a sudden fury, and he felt that he would have shouted abuse at her, had he not been terrified of provoking on her part a fresh outburst of devilry. It was now midnight, but he sent for priests and exorcists, and soon a service of Intercession was in full swing. The mad woman was now cursing and raving in the most horrifying manner. All night long she was cudgelled and pulled about by the priests[1]; dawn found her still maundering and weeping, but after a little while she became somewhat quieter, and Higekuro took this opportunity of sending his apologies to the New Palace. 'Some one here was suddenly taken ill last night,' he wrote, 'and it was impossible for me to get away. Besides, it looked as though we were in for a very heavy fall of snow, and it would have seemed to my friends very odd if I had insisted upon setting out. Time after time I was on the point of starting, and at this moment I am chilled to the bone with waiting about for a chance to escape. . . . I know well enough that you will not be heart-broken at my failure to appear; but I fear that others may have taken advantage of my discourtesy. . . .'

He was right. His absence had certainly not caused Tamakatsura the slightest concern, and the letter of apology, which he had penned with such agitation in the midst of a scene of utmost horror, she did not open or in any way acknowledge.

Next day Higekuro's wife was still in a very distracted condition, and further incantations were performed. His

[1] In order to drive the 'possession' out of her.

own secret prayer was that she might at least recover her reason for a sufficient length of time to permit of his installing Tamakatsura in the house. For at present any such step was clearly impossible. He who knew her as she ought to be could realize that her present savagery and malice were merely the result of her illness ; but a stranger would be terrified and disgusted.

At dusk he set out as usual for Tamakatsura's rooms. Since his wife's illness his wardrobe had been much neglected, and he was continually complaining that the garments put out for his use were so badly cut as to make him an object of ridicule as he drove through the streets. To-day a new cloak had been put out, which fitted him so ill that he refused to appear in it. The one he had worn on the night of the catastrophe was full of small holes made by fragments of red-hot charcoal, and though it had been carefully cleaned, there still clung to it a most unpleasant smell of burning. Yet in all his clothes the fragrance of the incense with which she had perfumed them that night was still distinctly perceptible. To arrive in this charred and smouldering condition at the New Palace was not to be thought of. He threw off all these garments, sent them to the washhouse, and once more had them thoroughly cleaned and set to rights. When they came back, Moku no Kimi was sent for to give them a good final perfuming. At last he was ready to start.

Even this one night's absence made her seem to him more marvellously lovely than ever. To be with her drove the thought of what was going on in his own house completely out of his head. And some such solace was needed, for the scene which he had just left had been agonizing in the extreme. He stayed at the New Palace till far into the next day. Spells and incantations seemed powerless against the spirit which had possessed the sick

woman, and she continued to rave in an unabating frenzy. Terrified lest she should attempt to disfigure him, or, at the best, play upon him some other sinister prank, Higekuro for the next few days kept as far away from her rooms as possible. When from time to time business compelled him to spend an hour or two at his house, he established himself at the farthest possible end of the building, and it was here that with great precautions he sent for his children to come and see him. The eldest was a girl of twelve; the two boys were younger. They had grown gradually used to the fact that their father and mother did not often meet; but till now there had never been any question of their mother's place being usurped by some one else, and primed by their nurses with the notion that Tamakatsura's projected arrival was part of a dark and monstrous conspiracy, they obeyed his summonses very sullenly.

Hearing what had taken place, Prince Hyōbukyō's first thought was to get his daughter as quickly as possible out of Higekuro's house. 'This is certain to lead to a definite and final breach,' he said. 'She cannot with any dignity remain a day longer under his roof. After all, so long as I am alive, she can have a very good time here. . . . There is no need to take this business too tragically. . . .' And without any warning he arrived at Higekuro's to fetch her away. It so happened that she was on this occasion enjoying an interval of comparative quietness and lucidity; though on recovering her self-possession, and realizing to some extent what had been passing, she was seized with a terrible fit of melancholy.

When informed that her father was at the door she knew at once what this implied, and determined to offer no resistance. To stay meant only to witness the last remnants of her husband's affection for her dwindle and

disappear. In the end she would probably be forced out of the house, under circumstances of even greater humiliation. Thinking that it would give her a feeling of support, her father had brought with him all her brothers ; both the elder ones, Sahyōye and the rest, all of whom were now great officers at Court, and had come uniformed and attended as though for a state ceremony ; and also her younger brothers, who by now were making their way in the world, one of them being a Captain in the Bodyguard, another a Lieutenant ; a third, Assistant in the National Board. The whole party filled no less than three coaches. That if her father ever came to fetch her, it would be in this cumbersome and ceremonious way, both she and her gentlewomen had long anticipated. But the sight of the formidable cortège which was to put an end for ever to her married life completely overwhelmed her. To make matters worse, it was announced that the part of his palace which Hyōbukyō could put at her disposal could not possibly house both her and all her gentlewomen. Hasty consultations followed. It was arranged that about half the maids should go back to their own homes. There was much weeping, whispered promises of reinstatement 'when Madam recovers herself,' and hasty sorting out of small personal belongings. Then there was the sick woman's own baggage to be considered, and heated discussions as to what she would need in her new home. Amid this scene of tears and confusion the three children strayed about, apparently quite unmoved. Calling to them, their mother now said : ' I have been in great trouble for a long time ; but now everything is over, and I do not care what becomes of me. But you three still have all your lives before you, and I do not want you to be dragged down with me in my ruin. You, my little girl, I shall keep with me, come what may. But I shall let the boys go to their

father as often as he wants them—indeed, I would leave them with him altogether if I thought he would go on taking any interest in them. Their grandfather will give them all the usual advantages and make them as happy as he can ; but when they grow up they will find it a great handicap to have been connected with him ; for nothing can nowadays be done except through Prince Genji, and your grandfather is on very bad terms with him. What I should really like would be to take you all to some forest far away in the mountains where no one could ever find us. . . . But I know that would be a crime . . .' and she burst into tears. The children had very little idea what all this was about, but they too began quietly weeping. ' Poor little things,' said the nurses. ' One knows from old stories that the kindest father will turn against his children if his heart is set upon another woman ; and a man so barbarous as our master, who puts his own wife out of his house when she is ailing, is not likely to show much pity towards these defenceless creatures. . . .' It was now getting late. It looked as if more snow were coming, and was indeed a most cheerless and uninviting evening. ' Make haste,' some one shouted from outside, ' it's blowing up for a storm.' Wiping her eyes, Makibashira went to the window and looked out. She was ready for the journey ; but the little girl, who had always been a great favourite with her father, could not believe that he would wish her to go away without even having said good-bye to him ; and she now flung herself upon a couch and declared that the carriage must start without her. Her mother tried to coax her, saying that things were bad enough as it was, and it was very unkind of her to be disobedient at such a time. But the child was all the while hoping that her father would come back to say good-bye to her, and was determined not to start until she had seen him. But the storm had

now commenced, and she at last saw for herself that there was not the remotest chance of his stirring on such a night.

There was a certain pillar on the right as you went into the women's rooms. Here it was that the little girl generally had her seat; and now, hating to think that this favourite corner of hers might soon become some stranger's sitting-place, she took a folded sheet of dark-brown paper, and hastily scribbling something upon it, she pushed it into a crack in the pillar with the point of her long hair-pin. What she wrote was: 'Though I say good-bye to this house and shall never see it again, do not forget me, O pillar of the Steadfast Tree!' As the carriage drove away the maids looked wistfully at the familiar haunts that they would in all likelihood never set eyes on again. At this last moment many a tree, never noticed before, seemed the one place where it would be pleasant to seek shade when the summer-time came round; and neither Lady Makibashira nor her ladies ceased to gaze behind them till the topmost bough of the last tree had faded out of sight. For this place had been their home for year upon year, and even though they had been leaving under very different circumstances, they must needs have forsaken it with many a bitter pang.

Meanwhile their arrival was awaited at Prince Hyōbukyō's palace with great trepidation. His wife, sharp-tongued as ever,[1] was bitterly reproaching him for having fallen out with Genji, whose hostility (she now made sure) was at the bottom of all their present trouble. 'It all began with your miserable cowardice over that Suma affair. You did not write to him once all the time he was away

[1] For this woman's character see vol. i, p. 145. She had pursued her rival, Murasaki's mother, 'with constant vexations and affronts; day in and day out this obstinate persecution continued, till at last she died of heart-break.'

from Court, and then were surprised that he would not help you to make an Empress of our younger daughter. You know quite well why it was that he would do nothing for you, as you confessed to me at the time and every one agreed. However, I did think that you had learnt your lesson and would take the first opportunity of re-establishing yourself in his good graces. But nothing of the kind. Prince Genji was completely under the sway of this bastard of yours, Lady Murasaki. Everything is easy for you. You had only to interest the girl in her sisters—people in her privileged position are expected to do something for their relations—and we could have got anything we liked to ask for. Instead of that, having got into a scrape with this supposed "daughter" of his, and being under the necessity of passing her off on any one who was fool enough to take her, he hit upon this simpleton Higekuro, whose wife, being your daughter, could easily be hustled out of the way. Upon my honour, I wonder you are willing to sit down under it all. . . .'

'Silence, woman,' he broke in. 'Prince Genji is our lord and master, and must be spoken of in this house with proper respect. A man of his intelligence is not as easily wheedled into friendship by one whom he believes to have done him an injury. My blunder at the time of his exile has turned out to be a great misfortune for us all. But I was not the only person to make that mistake. Indeed, if you look round the Court and note who has gone under and who has kept afloat, you will see that in every case it depended on what line they took in those Suma and Akashi days. So meticulous a scheme of punishments and rewards has surely never before been put into practice. I certainly have not fared worse than the rest. On the contrary, when a year or two ago I celebrated my fiftieth birthday,[1]

[1] See vol. iii, p. 139.

Prince Genji's interest in the affair gave it an importance far beyond what my rank and birth demanded ; and this was solely due to his affection for my daughter Murasaki, a feeling which you accuse me of never having turned to proper account.'

But his wife's bitterness only became more intense than ever ; moreover, she began to spread the most scandalous stories about Genji's conduct in the affair. And it may be imagined that in these inventions he did not come off lightly ; for hers was the most dangerous tongue in the whole Court. The removal of his wife and children came as a complete surprise to Higekuro. He assumed that Lady Makibashira had, in a sudden fit of childish spleen, implored her father to take this drastic step. But Prince Hyōbukyō must himself be held largely to blame, for Makibashira's mind was in an entirely volatile condition, and if her father had exercised a little tact she would a few hours later have been begging him to leave her where she was. 'This has come as rather a shock,' he said to Tamakatsura when he heard the news. ' Of course, in a way it makes it much easier for you to come and live with me. But in any case she is in a condition which would soon have made it absolutely necessary to shut her up in some outlying wing of the house ; and then you could have lived with me quite comfortably. I resent her being carried off so suddenly. It implies that I am not looking after her properly. I shall go at once to her father and complain.'

He was wearing a very handsome cloak lined with willow-green and blue-grey silken breeches. The costume became him particularly well, and the waiting-women who saw him pass out on the way to Hyōbukyō's palace could not for the lives of them make out why their mistress was so down upon him.

The news that she had just heard convinced Tamakatsura

more firmly than ever of the folly that she had committed in blindly yielding herself to such a man, and as he left the room she did not even raise her eyes to watch him go.

On the way to Prince Hyōbukyō's he called at his own house. He was met by Moku no Kimi, who being his personal servant had been left behind, and from her lips he heard the full story of his wife's departure. His distress was obvious, and when she was telling him of the little girl's reluctance to leave the house without saying good-bye to him Moku no Kimi feared that her master would altogether lose his self-possession. 'Hyōbukyō,' he said at last, 'does not in the least realize all that I patiently endured during the earlier stages of my wife's insanity. I do not think there are many men in the world who would have sacrificed themselves as I did. As regards her happiness, it is doubtful if this change of residence will make any difference at all, for her mind is now breaking down entirely. But in any case what sense can there be in letting her carry off those unfortunate children? . . .' Just then his eye fell upon the little girl's favourite pillar. He saw that something was poked into the crack, and grasping at once who had put it there, he rescued the folded note and put it in his sleeve. On the way to Prince Hyōbukyō's palace he read it, obliged to wipe the tears from his eyes while he did so, for though the handwriting had as yet no beauty, the sentiment expressed in the child's poem could not fail to move him.

On his arrival he found that there was no question of his wife or daughter being allowed to see him. From her parents he received this message: 'If your neglect of our daughter were of recent origin, we might be willing to listen to your protestations, and if satisfactory assurance were forthcoming might consider the possibility of permitting her return. But we are fully aware that your affections

have for a long time past been engaged in another quarter, and we see no reason to suppose that time would bring any amendment to your ways. We therefore decided to act without delay, and are persuaded that by so doing we have saved you from much annoyance and discomfort.' He replied that they had taken advantage of him in an extremely unfair way. They knew how great was his affection for the children, and might have assumed that his feelings towards the mother were at least sufficiently humane to make it worth while discussing this matter with him (many times, if necessary) before taking so drastic a measure. As it was, the world at large, which knew nothing of the real facts, must inevitably be led to the most damaging and at the same time erroneous conclusions.

So he justified himself, but with no effect ; and Hyōbukyō would not even allow the little girl to come out and talk to him. The elder boy, now ten years old, had already become a page at Court. He was a fascinating child and much beloved ; not exactly handsome, but very quick-witted and alert. The other, a boy of eight, was particularly good-looking and bore a strong resemblance to his sister. This child was now brought to Higekuro, and patting it on the head, he said sadly : ' It is well that you are so like your sister, for you are all that I shall see to remind me of her in the years that are to come.' He begged Prince Hyōbukyō to accord him even a few moments' interview. But the prince excused himself on the ground that ' he had caught cold and was at present avoiding all exertion.' There was nothing for it but to drive away. His two sons had climbed into the carriage to talk to him. They now begged for a drive ; but as he was going straight to Tamakatsura's, this was rather embarrassing. ' You had better stay here,' he said. ' I will come and see you again soon.' They gazed after the carriage, and when they presently saw that

instead of going in the direction of their father's house it had turned towards the New Palace, they looked at one another in bewilderment. But once he was back again in Tamakatsura's presence, the picture of these two children staring after him in consternation, the memory of his unhappy wife's ravings and contortions, all vanished completely from his mind, and it was long before he again attempted to get news from his father-in-law's house. He felt indeed that he could hardly be expected to risk the repetition of such a welcome as he had met with last time he called; but Hyōbukyō insisted upon regarding this abstention as a fresh offence, and made many caustic remarks concerning Higekuro's callous indifference.

'Even *I* have been getting into trouble over this business,' said Murasaki to Genji one day. 'My stepmother says I ought not to have let you upset her daughter's domestic arrangements!' 'It has been very difficult to know what to do,' he replied. 'If it had rested with me only, I should never have encouraged her to marry Higekuro. But her father was bent upon it, and I fell in with his desire. The Emperor was not at all pleased, and one naturally hears it said that all the other suitors are in a rage with me; though I can hardly believe this of Prince Sochi, who is such a sensible fellow, that I am sure as soon as he sees that I have really given Tamakatsura up he will not, despite his disappointment, be so unreasonable as to pick a quarrel with *me*. I am very glad that the true nature of my relations with her is now known. For though I think that in general it is better for people to keep their private affairs to themselves, there are cases where, unless all be known, far worse things will be imagined than there is any warrant for assuming.'

Meanwhile Tamakatsura was taking less trouble than ever to pretend that Higekuro's caresses were agreeable

to her. But his efforts to overcome her distaste for him were untiring, and when the time came for her to spend a few days at the Palace in order to be presented to the Emperor, Higekuro did his best to prevent or at least postpone this separation. But it was evident that the Emperor would regard any further refusal as an act of discourtesy; Genji and Tō no Chūjō both strongly urged him to obey at once, and Higekuro himself discovered, on looking into the matter, that there were numberless precedents for the Emperor's request. Accordingly he yielded, and in the spring of the next year she was brought to the Palace. There was a dancing festival going on at the time, and consequently the ceremonies connected with her Presentation attracted very little notice. But it was known that Genji, Tō no Chūjō and Higekuro, the three most powerful men in the country, were her sponsors; while she was actually attended at the time of her arrival by Yūgiri and several of her elder brothers, so that it was by no means likely that she would be overlooked. The room that was allotted to her was separated only by a covered gallery from the apartments of Lady Nishi no Miya, Prince Hyōbukyō's eldest daughter; but though their habitations were divided by so small a space, their interests and sympathies could hardly have been farther apart, and no civilities were exchanged between them.

It happened to be a moment when the scene at Court was simplified by the absence of low-born favourites or clandestine mistresses. Four great ladies, Akikonomu, Lady Chūjō, Nishi no Miya (whom I have just mentioned), and finally a daughter of the Minister of the Left held absolute sway. Apart from them, two young girls, daughters of the Junior State Secretary and the Chancellor, enjoyed a certain prominence; but on the whole the field was remarkably clear.

This year the Mummers [1] visited all the apartments at Court where they had kinswomen or connections of any kind, and the whole affair was far more animated and interesting than usual. The reception given to the dancers in the various quarters they visited was of the most magnificent kind, such a display of hangings and gay-coloured favours seldom having been witnessed. One of the most dazzling displays took place in the rooms of the Crown Prince's mother, Lady Jōkyōden. The Prince was still a mere child,[2] but his nursery had already become a centre of fashionable activities.

After performing before the Emperor, the Mummers visited the quarters of Lady Akikonomu, and finally finished their round very late in the day at the ex-Emperor Suzaku's palace. There had been some talk of their going on to Genji's; but it would have been inconvenient to receive them at such an hour, and he discouraged the visit. On their way back from Suzaku's, already much enlivened by the hospitality which they had received during the course of the evening, they went the round of the Crown Prince's apartments, singing the 'Bamboo River' [3] at the tops of their voices. Faint streaks of light were already appearing in the sky when they were joined by a band of young men, which included some of Tō no Chūjō's sons and a number of courtiers famous for the beauty of their voices. The youngest among them all was Chūjō's eighth son, who being the child of his legitimate wife, had been brought up to regard himself as a little person of considerable consequence. He was a good-looking child, about the same age as Higekuro's eldest boy, with whom he was often favourably compared. Unlike many of the other children

[1] See vol. iii, p. 24.

[2] He must by now be about eleven, having been born shortly before Genji's exile.

[3] See vol. iii, p. 215.

who saw the sights that day, he was not at all overawed by the first appearance at Court of this much-talked-about lady, but on the contrary stared at her to his fill.

Tamakatsura had not so much experience of Court festivities as was possessed by most of her rivals and neighbours. She wisely refrained from venturing upon any unusual or particularly ambitious combinations of colour. But upon the general lines laid down by the taste of her competitors, she often achieved a success considerably greater than theirs. Both she and her gentlewomen found this sojourn at the Palace a most welcome distraction, and only wished that it might be indefinitely prolonged.

Wherever they went the Mummers were received with presents of costly wadded cloaks and a profusion of good things both to eat and drink. Though it was not at Tamakatsura's that they were to have their set banquet, the entertainment she gave them was, by Higekuro's help, on so generous a scale that it was hard to recognize in it the mere 'passing refreshments,'[1] which it was supposed to represent. Higekuro was himself on duty at the Palace that day, and said to his wife more than once during the course of the festivities, 'There is no need whatever for you to sleep here a second night; it would look as though you had changed your mind and meant to stay on in the Palace.' She did not answer. But her gentlewomen protested that Genji had only allowed her to leave the New Palace on the express understanding that she should pay a leisurely visit to the Emperor, which, considering she had never once been to Court before and might not go again for a long time, was the least that ordinary good breeding demanded. To leave so soon as this would be far too precipitate. . . .

[1] 'Mizu-umaya,' or water-stabling, as it was technically called by the dancers. The regular banquet was called 'ii-umaya,' or rice-stabling.

He noted with pain her obvious reluctance to leave a place the chief charm of which, as he conjectured, lay in the fact that it afforded her a refuge from his embraces.

Prince Sochi was present when the Mummers performed at the Palace, and his heart beat wildly as he pressed near the Lady-of-the-Bedchamber's [1] office. Knowing that if she recognized a note as coming from him she would not open it, he found an excuse for going to Higekuro's official quarters and sent a messenger from there. Tamakatsura naturally thought that the note came from her husband, and reluctantly opened it: 'Hatefullest of seasons for me has Spring become, who must stand by and watch the birds of the deep forest folded wing in wing.' So ran his poem. She blushed crimson as she read it, and was just thinking how she could possibly reply, when the Emperor himself came that way. The moon had risen, and in its full light she scanned his countenance. He was, she at once noticed, extraordinarily like Genji, and it was a relief to her to discover that there were perhaps people in the world who possessed Genji's beauty yet at the same time were not cut off from her by fictitious parental ties. But her guardian had been extremely fond of her, of that there could be no doubt; whereas this young man unfortunately showed no signs whatever of feeling for her one particle of the affection which Genji had attributed to him. His Majesty expressed in a very good-tempered and considerate way his regret that she had decided not to live permanently at the Palace. This made her feel extremely uncomfortable; she hid her face in her sleeve and did not reply. 'I should like so much to know what is going on in your mind,' he said at last. 'I have a small piece of news for you which I flattered myself would not be unwelcome. But I now remember that not answering is a peculiarity of yours.'

[1] Tamakatsura.

He then handed her an acrostic poem in which he at the same time asked what previous affection on her side had for so long delayed their meeting, and also announced that she had been promoted to the Third Rank. 'I had hoped that in time we might become very close friends,' he added. 'But I see that you hold a different view.' There came into his voice as he said these few words a new tone, which proved to her in an instant that the Emperor's feelings as well as his outward appearance were after all uncommonly like those of Genji. Her heart leapt, and she replied with the poem: 'Of what former love you speak I know not; but henceforward him alone I serve who put the purple on my sleeve.'[1] 'It is now my duty to earn what hitherto I have done so little to deserve,' she said timidly. At this he laughed. 'No,' he said, 'you have got your reward, and you had better make the most of it. I did not mean it as a bribe. But I think that any reasonable person would admit I had come very badly out of the business. . . .' He spoke lightly, but it was evident that he was genuinely piqued. 'This is dreadful,' thought poor Tamakatsura. 'Will a handsome man never fall in love with me without saying in the same breath that we must part for ever?' Evidently he regarded her marriage as a fatal bar to friendship. She became very staid in her manner. Noting this, the Emperor feared that he had shocked her, and made up his mind (for he had by no means abandoned the idea of continuing the acquaintance) henceforth to advance more cautiously.

Meanwhile it reached Higekuro's ears that the Emperor was with her, and falling into a panic he again began scheming to carry her home at the earliest possible moment. Nor did she attempt to dissuade him, for repeated disasters had at last destroyed in her all capacity for resistance.

[1] Promoted her to the Third Rank.

Higekuro invented one pretext after another for her instant removal, and when each in turn had been easily disposed of, he tried to enlist the help of Tō no Chūjō and others of the Court Council. At last the Imperial sanction was obtained. 'I see that I had better let her go,' said the young Emperor good-humouredly. 'If I keep her now, Higekuro will not allow her to come here again ; and I am hoping for frequent visits. I think I am right in saying that I first began to take interest in her long before Prince Higekuro set eyes upon her. But he got to work much more quickly than I, and fully deserves the advantage which he has gained. . . . I have an idea that there was a famous case [1] of this kind in years gone by, but cannot now recall the names.' When he had seen her in the distance years ago his curiosity had been aroused, and he had felt that she might be worth getting to know. But at close quarters he found her far more attractive than he had imagined or been led by those who knew her to suppose. He could not now forgive himself for having handled the affair so incompetently. Having at one moment determined to give her confidence by slow stages, he felt at the next that he had not made his sentiments sufficiently plain, and plunged into the most impassioned and hectic avowals. She could not help thinking how well her own state of mind matched that of the lady to whose story the Emperor had already referred.

Meanwhile the letters of several public men who were seeking audience with his Majesty had for some time been waiting in the corridor, and just outside the door Higekuro stood officiously mounting sentry over the apartment. 'I

[1] In the 9th century Fujiwara no Tokihira carried off a lady who had for some time been admired by Taira no Sadabumi. When reproached by Sadabumi for her fickleness, the lady replied : 'What in waking hours I may have promised I know not ; but now I wander in the mazes of a dream ; or *some one* wanders, for I scarce think it can be I.'

know he is an officer in the Bodyguard,' said the Emperor, annoyed by his persistency, ' but I think that on this occasion he is performing his professional duties rather too thoroughly.'

At parting he gave her the poem : ' Because the Ninefold Hedge of royalty girds me about, not even the scent of the plum-blossom, nay, not even so much [1] is carried to the steps of my Throne.' Not a very remarkable poem, as on later reflection she would easily have perceived ; but at the time it seemed to her a masterly performance. ' Higekuro,' the Emperor added, ' is like the man who " went to gather violets " ; I cannot expect that he should be willing even for the briefest space to " quit the fields of Spring." [2] Nor have I the heart to ask it of him. Henceforward I shall not attempt to approach you. . . .'

She could not but admire his delicacy of feeling : ' Though the scent of this blossom be not as that of others that grow upon the tree, yet even so much let the wind carry to and from your Throne.' [3] It cost him much to part from her for the last time as he supposed, and it was with many backward glances that he now left her room.

Higekuro was determined that she should not sleep another night at the Palace. He knew that if he broached the matter beforehand to his colleagues on the Council they would certainly refuse to countenance so precipitate a step. Accordingly, without mentioning the matter to anybody, he went straight to Tamakatsura and said : ' I have suddenly caught a severe chill, and it is essential that I should go at once to some place where I can be properly looked after. There is nothing so awkward as being ill in other people's houses.' He spoke in such a weak, plaintive

[1] *Ka bakari* means ' so much,' and also ' only the scent.'
[2] Allusion to a poem by Yamabe no Akahito (8th century).
[3] I.e. write to me sometimes.

tone that she felt quite sorry for him. A few hours later she was already installed in Higekuro's house.

Her father Tō no Chūjō soon heard of this. He was not best pleased, for he feared that the Emperor would regard so sudden a flight as very discourteous. But on the whole he was glad he had not been consulted, for he had no desire to quarrel with Higekuro over so small a matter. In fact, as he usually did when things went wrong, he chose to regard it as Genji's affair rather than his own ; and Genji, although this sudden termination of his tutelage over the girl came as a great shock to him, naturally did not feel called upon to interfere.

Higekuro, though in his heart of hearts he knew that Tamakatsura had no more chosen this destiny than the smoke from the salt-kilns chooses to be blown back across the hill, was so much elated by his success that for the moment her contempt for him did not in the least spoil his pleasure. His state of mind was indeed that of some brigand chief who has carried off an unwilling bride at his saddle-croup. He did indeed scold her for having remained closeted so long with the Emperor. This seemed to her insufferably petty and vindictive on Higekuro's part. Henceforward she took less and less pains even to keep up in public the appearance of being on any kind of terms with him. He was also cut off from all intercourse with Prince Hyōbukyō's family. He tried to give the impression that he regarded this as no great loss ; but in reality he felt this isolation acutely. However, he did not attempt to communicate with the Prince, and henceforward spent the whole of his time in lavishing unwanted attentions upon his new-won prize.

To Genji, who had for months past been preparing himself for Tamakatsura's departure, her loss came as a far greater blow than he had ever anticipated. It was not indeed

her departure (he explained to himself) that he found difficult to bear, but the suddenness and completeness with which Higekuro had taken possession. But be that as it may, he could not for an instant stop thinking about her, and soon fell into a condition of absent-mindedness and melancholy that was observed by all who met him. It is said that whatever happens to us is ruled by our conduct in previous existences, or, as others would express it, by Fate. But it seemed to Genji that for the miseries into which he constantly found himself plunged, no other person or power could possibly be held responsible. They sprang from his own excessive susceptibility, and from no other cause whatever. He longed to write to her ; but it seemed impossible, now that she was in the hands of the grim, unbending Higekuro, to address to her the small humours and absurdities of which their correspondence was usually composed. In the second month a period of heavy rain set in ; after the ceremonies of the New Year this season is apt to seem rather flat and stale, and, desperately in need of distraction, Genji broke all his resolutions and called at Prince Higekuro's house. He knew, however, that there was no chance of his seeing her personally, and though it was painful to him, who had been used to spend hour after hour in her company, merely to send in a note, this was the most he dared to attempt. And even so, despite the fact that he was able to get hold of the old nurse Ukon and send the letter through her, he thought it unwise to send a closed note and was therefore obliged to express himself in the most guarded manner, trusting that she would be able to read between the lines. ' In these dull days when hour on hour the spring rain spills upon the quiet earth, do you at times recall the people and the palace whence you came ? ' So he wrote, adding : ' This is a dreary season at best ; and worse than ever for me, who

am tormented by longings and recollections of which I cannot now speak.' Ukon took the letter and succeeded in conveying it to Tamakatsura at one of the rare moments when Higekuro was absent from her side. The old woman, of course, knew nothing of Genji's sentiments towards her mistress, who had never breathed to any one a word concerning his occasional indiscretions and excesses; but watching Tamakatsura's face as she read the letter Ukon now guessed a good deal of the truth. But exactly how much had happened between them? That was a question about which Ukon henceforward frequently puzzled her head; but she was unable to reach any conclusion.

Throughout this time Genji was constantly reminded of his separation from Oborozuki [1] at the time when she became Consort of the Emperor Suzaku. She too was Lady-of-the-Bedchamber; she too was carried away and locked up in a place whither it was impossible for him to pursue her. He remembered having been very unhappy then, but nothing like so miserable as he was now. Was it that he was becoming more and more sentimental, he asked himself, or merely that the sufferings of the moment always seem more acute than those which we conjure up out of the past? But whether or no the miseries of to-day were really worse than those of yesterday, of this much he was sure, that from none of his divagations had anything but torment and agitation ever ensued. Well, it was all over now; henceforward his existence would be free from these devastating entanglements, and no doubt he would be a great deal happier than ever before. But for the moment it was not so very easy as he had imagined to begin this new life of resignation and tranquillity. He thought he would make use of the bad weather to practise a little on his zithern; but no sooner did he take it into his hands

[1] Vol. ii, p. 54.

than he began to recall how Tamakatsura had played this and that phrase or run at the time when he was giving her a lesson every day. To break the spell of these recollections he tuned his instrument to the Eastern Mode and played the old song 'Let the weeds grow.' [1] Could she have seen him as he sat playing that lovely air, it would have been strange indeed if she had not wished herself back in her late home.

The young Emperor too, though their acquaintance had been so brief, could not get Tamakatsura out of his head. 'As she went by, trailing the skirts of her crimson gown. . . .' [2] For some reason these words haunted him, though the poem could scarcely be more ill-sounding and crude than it is; and he too began to contrive secret ways of communicating with her. But she had long ago made up her mind that happiness was not to be her fate, and could not bring herself to toy with it by the familiar interchange of pretty thoughts and images. Letter after letter arrived; but in her replies she never went beyond a formal acknowledgment. Often she remembered with gratitude Genji's untiring devotion to her interests and comforts. What matter if he fell between the two extremes of parent and lover? No one, she felt sure, would ever look after her as he had done.

It was now the third month. The wisteria and mountain-kerria in the gardens of the New Palace were in full bloom, loveliest of all at evening, when the light of the setting sun slanted through the hanging sprays of delicate blossom. This was a moment of the year that had always given him

[1] 'The water-weeds that grow in the pool on the plain of Oshitaka where wild doves feed—do not cut them at the root, for they will not grow again. Do not cut them at the root.'

[2] 'Outdoors I think, at home I think of how she looked that day as she went by trailing the skirts of her crimson gown.' *Manyōshū* 2550. A very rough, primitive poem.

an intense delight ; but now it hardly seemed to move him. He left Murasaki's domain and made his way to the western garden.[1] Here too the mountain-kerria was in magnificent bloom. In especial he noticed a great trail of it that hung across a clump of Chinese bamboos and recited to himself the poem : ' O mountain flower that lovest to grow upon the rocks,[2] thou shalt teach me to endure in silence,[2] the love that I must hide.' Never before had he repented so bitterly of his determination to surrender the girl into other hands. It had seemed while she was with him so easy to be wise, to make self-sacrificing resolutions. But now that he had lost her it was incredible that he could ever have deliberately planned and executed so terrible a disaster. He happened to notice that there were a lot of eggs in the pigeon-house, and arranging them prettily in a basket along with oranges and lemons he sent it as a present to Tamakatsura, not with any very definite intention.[3] When Higekuro saw the basket with its accompanying note, he burst out laughing : ' What an extraordinary man this Genji is ! ' he said. ' Why, even if he were your real father he could not now that you are married expect to meet you except on particular occasions. What does he want ? He seems, in one way or another, to be always complaining that he does not see you.' She did not seem to have any intention of acknowledging the gift, and as the messenger was still waiting, Higekuro said : ' Let me answer it for you ! ' ' I am not minded that any should reclaim her, this fledgling that was not counted among the brood of either nest.' Such was the poem he sent, and he added : ' My wife was surprised at the nature

[1] Tamakatsura's former apartments. [2] *Iwa*—' rock ' and ' silent.'

[3] But there is a hint that Tamakatsura is shut away in Higekuro's palace like a tame bird in a cage. The bird mentioned is really a kind of duck, but much smaller. ' Duck's eggs ' would give a wholly wrong visual impression.

of your gift, and was at a loss how to reply without seeming to attach an undue importance to it. . . .'

Genji laughed when the note was brought to him. 'I have never known Higekuro stoop to concern himself in such trifles as this,' he said. 'What is the world coming to?' But in his heart he was deeply offended by the arrogantly possessive tone of Higekuro's letter.

As the months went by Lady Makibashira became more and more deeply buried in her own dark and frightful thoughts. Soon she seemed to be gradually lapsing into complete helplessness and imbecility. Higekuro enquired after her constantly and did everything in his power to make her comfortable, incurring considerable outlay on her behalf, and indeed watching over her practical interests exactly as he would have done if she had still been at home. He continued to be devotedly attached to his children, but Prince Hyōbukyō would not allow him to see the little girl. The boys, however, were constantly at their father's house, and came back chattering about 'such a nice, new lady' who had come to live there. 'She knows all sorts of lovely games and plays with us all day,' they said. The little girl stared at them open-eyed, having formed in her mind a very different picture of the woman whom her present guardians represented always as the unscrupulous monster who had ruined their father's home. But in reality it was not surprising that Tamakatsura should have won the boys' hearts, for she possessed an extraordinary faculty for making herself liked by people of all sorts and ages wherever she went.

In the eleventh month of that year she bore Higekuro a handsome boy. The father's delight knew no bounds, and the solicitude with which he watched over both mother and child can easily be imagined. Tō no Chūjō too rejoiced that the match should be turning out so unqualified a success,

and felt that he had acted very wisely in recommending it. And certainly, he said to himself, she deserved a success, for she possessed quite as much charm as the sisters over whom he had taken a great deal more trouble. Kashiwagi too was glad that all seemed to be going well, for he had settled down into the position of an extremely helpful and admiring brother. Perhaps, however, he still cared for her with something more than brotherly affection ; he had a feeling that he would have preferred the child to be some one else's rather than Higekuro's ; for example, if only she had borne such a child (so he reflected as he gazed at the infant) to the Emperor Ryōzen, who constantly lamented that he had no children, what a future might have been in store for it !

After her recovery Tamakatsura continued to administer the business of the Bedchamber from her husband's house, and seemed to show no intention of ever again appearing at the Palace. There were precedents for such an arrangement as this, and no exception could well be taken to it.

But to go back a little. In the autumn of this year Tō no Chūjō's eccentric daughter, foiled in her ambition to become Lady-of-the-Bedchamber, added to the embarrassment of her relations by a series of the most flutter-brained flirtations. Her sister Lady Chūjō lived in a constant state of agitation, convinced that sooner or later this Lady of Ōmi would get into some scrape of a kind which might seriously compromise the whole family. She saw no reason why she should be saddled with so needless a responsibility and begged her father to intervene. Tō no Chūjō accordingly sent for her and warned her as impressively as he could that she must in future stay in her sister's rooms and not wander all over the house, as she had lately developed the habit of doing. This remonstrance, however, had no

effect, and she was soon causing as much anxiety as ever to her unwilling sponsors.

It happened one day that a number of distinguished courtiers had come to the house ; it was an autumn night of exceptional beauty, music was in progress, and every one was in uncommonly good spirits. Even Yūgiri, usually so quiet and orderly, was talking in rather an excited manner. Some one amid the group of ladies at the end of the room pointed him out to her neighbour and made some remark to the effect that she had never seen him look so handsome. 'Handsome! Who's handsome?' screamed a piercing voice, the owner of which suddenly craned her neck in the direction indicated; and before any one could stop her the Lady of Ōmi had pressed her way to the front of the throng, where she stood staring at Yūgiri open-mouthed, while every one present wondered what hideous piece of folly or impertinence would shortly issue from those ecstatically parted lips. But all she did was to point at the embarrassed Yūgiri and say in a voice which, though it was meant to be a whisper, was audible all over the room: 'Look at that one, now, just look at him!' And she recited in a ringing voice the poem:

> If your ship is lost at sea
> And you cannot land where you'd like to be,
> You'd better come aboard of me.[1]

'Like the man who lost his rudder said, when he found himself at the same place where he started: "It all comes to the same thing in the end,"' she added encouragingly.

Who on earth could this extraordinary madcap be, wondered poor Yūgiri, when suddenly he recollected the queer stories that had a little while ago been current about some odd girl whom Tō no Chūjō had adopted. This

[1] If you can't have Kumoi, why not marry me?

of course must be she, and laughing, he answered her with the poem :

> Though my good ship should split in two,
> I'd rather be drowned with all my crew
> Than trust my life to one like you.

That does not sound very kind, she thought.

CHAPTER IV

THE SPRAY OF PLUM-BLOSSOM

ALTHOUGH it was early days to begin thinking about the little Akashi Princess's Initiation, Genji seemed bent upon celebrating it immediately. The Heir Apparent's Putting on of the Trousers was to take place in the second month, and it was perhaps Genji's wish that the girl should go to the Palace as soon as the little prince set up a separate establishment. Towards the end of the first month, a moment when there is very little going on at home or abroad, Genji held an inspection of the perfumes and incenses that were to be used at the Initiation. He first looked through the scents that had recently been forwarded to the Capital by the Governor of Tsukushi. He soon came to the conclusion that these modern importations fell far behind what used to reach this country in former times, and opening his storehouses at the Nijō-in he brought out all the old Chinese perfumes he could find and had them carried to his New Palace. 'With perfumes,' he said, 'it is just as it is with embroideries and woven brocades. The old ones are far better workmanship than anything that is turned out to-day.' So saying, he began to look out for likely pieces of embroidery and gold brocade; for many would be wanted to fringe the box-covers, carpets and cushions used in the ceremony of Presentation at the Palace. Luckily he came upon some particularly fine pieces presented to his father, the late Emperor, by the Korean soothsayers who had come to Court in the earlier part of his reign.[1] These so far

[1] At the time of Genji's birth. See vol. i, p. 38.

excelled what was now imported that he determined to make use only of ancient pieces, and distributed among his friends [1] the stuffs sent in for the occasion by the Governor of Tsukushi. But with the perfumes to be used at the Initiation such a method was impossible, for the stock of ancient perfumes would soon have run out. In distributing a supply of perfumes to the various members of his household, he therefore ordered that new and old should be mixed. Then there were the presents to be got ready, for no one who came to the Initiation could be allowed to go away without some small gift ; and in addition to these there were the particular rewards granted to the princes and noblemen who took the leading part in the affair. Both at the New Palace and at the Nijō-in there was such a bustle as seldom before, accompanied, in every quarter of each establishment, by a continual jingling of pestle and mortar.[2] Meanwhile Genji, who by some means or other had contrived to get hold of two secret recipes very jealously guarded by the Emperor Nimmyō,[3] and thought never to have been transmitted to any of his descendants, was locked away in his own rooms, completely absorbed in certain mysterious experiments. Murasaki, not to be outdone, succeeded in discovering a recipe that had belonged to Prince Motoyasu, the son of Nimmyō, and ensconcing herself in a secret closet behind the double-doors of the Great Bedroom, refused to give any information as to what was afoot, though, as Genji remarked, he would soon know how she was getting on by the scent that emanated from her hiding-place. Indeed they both threw themselves into the thing with such abandon that it was hard to believe they were to play the part of dignified elders at the coming

[1] Instead of using them for the ceremony.
[2] The ingredients of the perfumes were pounded in metal mortars.
[3] 9th century.

ceremony. Both he and she were obliged to seek the assistance of a few chosen attendants; for even when the perfumes were made there was still a great deal of work to be done. Such exquisite scents could not be crammed into any stray vessel that lay handy. Hours were spent in selecting jars of appropriate shape, incense-burners incised with an exactly suitable flower-pattern, boxes that would not disgrace the marvels they were to contain. And to add to their difficulties, there must be a touch of novelty, a suggestion of surprise, about every article. Meanwhile similar scenes were in progress throughout the New Palace and the Nijō-in, each competitor straining every nerve to produce a blend which should attract the notice of her fastidious patron.

On the tenth day of the second month there was a little rain, not more than was needed to bring to perfection the smell and colour of the red plum-blossom in front of Genji's palace. Prince Sochi had heard of the existing preparations which were afoot, and being on intimate terms with the household, ventured to call, though he knew that every one must be very busy. After talking of one thing and another, he went out with Genji to look at the flowers; suddenly a messenger arrived, bearing a letter tied to a spray of half-scattered plum-blossom. He announced that he came from Princess Asagao, the former Vestal Virgin. Sochi had heard of Genji's admiration for this lady: 'What does she say?' he asked. 'I hope you are beginning to make a little progress.' Genji smiled. 'It is a business letter,' he said. 'She has heard that we are all making perfumes, and as she has had a good deal of experience in that line, she gives me a few hints.' So saying, he quickly hid the letter. But there was evidently some truth in his account, for the messenger had also brought a cedar-wood box containing two glass bowls, each filled with large balls

of incense. One was of blue glass, and on this there was a five-pointed pine-leaf pattern ; the other was of white glass, carved with a plum-blossom spray. Even the cord with which the box was tied had evidently been chosen with the greatest care, and was delightfully soft to the touch. 'What an elegant affair!' exclaimed Prince Sochi, staring hard at the box. He was able as he did so to decipher the poem which was attached to it : 'Though, like the plum-branch that I send, these perfumes have small fragrance of their own, yet worn by you they will not lack for regal scent. . . .' The entertainment of the messenger was entrusted to Yūgiri, who plied him with drink, and as payment for his trouble gave him a close-fitting Chinese lady's gown, red plum-blossom colour without, yellow within. For his reply Genji chose paper of the same colour as the blossom she had sent, and attached the letter to a spray from the aforementioned trees in front of his own window. 'I can imagine what sort of thing he is writing,' thought Sochi as he watched Genji compose the answer. 'But I really wonder that, after all the confidences we have exchanged, he should think it necessary to be so secretive,' and he wondered whether there were not some additional mystery beyond what he could possibly surmise. 'I can see you think you have scented a mystery,' said Genji. 'You are quite wrong ; there is no corner of my heart which I am not willing you should explore.' Genji's poem ran : 'Only too profoundly does the scent of your blossoms stir me, though lest the world should see my weakness I have hidden their fragrance deep within the folds of my dress.'

'You will think,' he said, turning to Prince Sochi, 'that we are making a great deal too much fuss over the coming celebration. For my part I excuse myself on the ground that she is my only daughter. I am under no delusions

about her looks or intelligence, and did not like to trouble any outside person to come and stand sponsor for her at the ceremony. The Empress Akikonomu, who is staying here on leave from the Palace, has kindly consented to undertake the task, and it is in deference to her position that I am doing everything in proper style.' 'I am so glad you got hold of the Empress,' said Prince Sochi; 'I think it is a very good idea; for we all hope that your little girl will one day occupy the position that Akikonomu holds now.' At this moment messengers arrived from all the various quarters of the establishment where the blending of perfumes had been in progress, for Genji had decided that the last time to make trial of them was when the evening air began to grow damp. 'You must help me to judge these perfumes,' said Genji to his brother. 'I am sure there is no one who knows more about it than you.' The incense-burners were brought, and though Prince Sochi protested that this was not at all in his line, he was soon amazing every one present by the incredible delicacy of his perceptions. He would say of some perfume the ingredients of which were quite unknown to him: 'There is a fraction too much cloves in this,' or of another: 'Just a trifle too little aloes.' He never made any sweeping criticism, but established a sufficient number of small points to allow of arranging the competitors, all of whom would to any common critic have seemed equally unimpeachable, in a definite and justified order of precedence.

When this was over, Genji's two secret blends were at last submitted to the light of day. Just as the Emperor Nimmyō had on a famous occasion buried his incense at the edge of the moat near the barracks of the Bodyguard of the Right, so Genji had now buried his two secret compounds under the bank of a little stream that ran out near the western cross-gallery of his palace. Koremitsu's son

Hyōye no Jō was now sent to dig them up, and they were finally laid before Prince Sochi by Yūgiri. 'No, no,' said Sochi. 'The room is getting too smoky. In such an atmosphere it is quite impossible to go on judging. . . .' But nothing could be done, for in every quarter of the house the manufacture of incense had been proceeding so busily that the air was laden with perfume. The Prince went on sniffing bravely, and the subtlety with which, even under such adverse circumstances, he detected small merits and defects, won universal applause. Though there was very little to choose between the different *kurobō* submitted, on the whole Princess Asagao's was declared to be the best, for it combined the strong fragrance usual to this species with a delightful delicacy and mildness. Among the various *jijū* incenses, Genji's easily came out on top, for it was indeed an extraordinarily delightful and intriguing mixture. Murasaki had submitted three kinds. It was agreed that her *baikwa* was a more distinctive and ingenious blend than the other two; Prince Sochi was full of enthusiasm for it, saying he could imagine no incense that would mix so well with the prevailing scent of the air at this season.

The Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers, thinking that if she allowed the gentlewomen under her control to send in a variety of perfumes the task of the judges would be tiresomely complicated and lengthy (for even in such a matter as this she did not fail to show her usual modesty), sent in only one kind of incense, the sort called Lotus Leaf, but of a very delicate and subtle variety, which seemed to Genji characteristic of her unassuming personality. The Lady from Akashi, who presided over the Winter Garden, and might have been expected to offer an incense appropriate to her own season, was not inclined to risk so direct a challenge to the mistresses of Summer and Spring. Fortu-

nately she remembered a recipe that had been invented by Minamoto no Kintada [1] with the help of notes inherited from the Emperor Uda.[2] This by itself would have sufficed to win considerable approbation; but she also succeeded in recollecting the ingredients of the famous Hundred Steps Incense,[3] and Sochi was obliged to pronounce each of those contributions deserving of the highest honours. 'Our judge is losing his subtlety,' complained Genji, 'and is obliged to fall back upon praising everything indiscriminately.'

The moon had now risen. Supper was served, and afterwards stories were told by various members of the party. A slight mist veiled the moon with the most entrancing effect. The rain of the morning had left a slight breeze in its trail, that continually wafted into the already thickly perfumed rooms of the house fresh perfumes from the trees in the garden. From the Music Room came sounds of flute and string, for a practice was in progress, music being destined to play an important part in the ceremonies of the ensuing day. Many courtiers had arrived, and there was a noise of zitherns being got into trim, and an agreeable meandering of flutes. Tō no Chūjō's sons Kashiwagi and Kōbai had come merely to make the formal announcement of their intention to take part in to-morrow's proceedings. But they were now prevailed upon to stay and join in the music, Genji himself providing the instruments. At the same time he set a lute in front of Prince Sochi, and himself sent for his great Chinese zithern. Kashiwagi played upon the *wagon*,[4] and so a quite interesting combination was possible. Yūgiri then played upon the cross-flute, choosing airs appropriate to the season; away went

[1] Grandson of the Emperor Uda. A famous poet and æsthete.
[2] A.D. 889–897.
[3] So called because it could be smelt a hundred feet away.
[4] Japanese zithern.

the shrill notes on their journey to the country of the clouds. It will be remembered that Kashiwagi's brother Kōbai was famous for his voice. It was he who as a boy sang the Ballad of Takasago at the time of the rhyme-covering competitions. He now sang *Umegaye*: 'Look, to a bough of the plum-tree the nightingale has come to tell us that Spring is here. But though he sings, but though he sings, the snow is falling fast.' Genji and his brother joined in the refrain, and though more practice would have been required to make the thing a complete success, it afforded a very agreeable evening's entertainment. When the wine was handed round Prince Sochi recited the verse: 'To an ecstasy the "Song of the nightingale" has carried us, who by the beauty of the snow-white boughs already were enthralled.' To which Genji replied: 'Prince, if this springtime no other beacon guide you to my house, let these frail flowers suffice to bring you back before their time is passed.' So saying he handed the cup to Kashiwagi, who addressing Yūgiri recited the verse: 'Play shrilly once again the flute-songs of the night, lest on his bed of flowers the weary nightingale should fall asleep.' And Yūgiri: 'Ask me not to shake with the shrill blast of piping those flowers that even the wild Spring wind had not the heart to stir.' At this whimsical excuse every one laughed. When it came to Kōbai's turn, he sang: 'Did not the mists of Spring enfold both earth and sky, the birds that sleep so sound had long ago burst out into their clamorous daybreak song.' And true enough, the first streaks of light were already appearing in the eastern sky. Sochi announced that he must go at once. As a reward for his services in judging at the competition Genji gave him a cloak from his own wardrobe and two jars of incense which had been left unopened during the trials. These were put in his carriage, and finding them there, Sochi improvised

the poem: 'Incense and fine clothes! What gifts are these for an honest man to carry home at dawn?' 'You must not be so frightened of your family,' laughed Genji, waiting beside the carriage while the bulls were being yoked; and he answered Sochi with the poem; 'Well can I believe it, dear friend, that your family will rub their eyes at seeing you come home with so decent a coat upon your back.' Sochi, who thought himself a very well-dressed man, did not take this in very good part. The other guests also received small presents in memory of the occasion—a gown, a brocaded under-robe, or the like.

The ceremony of Initiation took place in Akikonomu's rooms in the evening of the next day. The company arrived at the hour of the Dog.[1] The Empress herself was in the small side-room behind the double-doors at the western end of the corridor, and here she was soon joined by the gentlewomen entrusted with the dressing of the Initiate's hair. For this room had been set apart as her dressing-place. Murasaki was also there, and as both ladies were attended by a full complement of gentlewomen-in-waiting, there was not much room to spare. The little Princess herself did not arrive till the hour of the Rat,[2] when the actual Tying of the Belt took place. The room was lit only by the flickering rays of the great lamp in the corridor outside; but, from what she could see of the child, Akikonomu (who happened not to have come across her before) made her out to be very good-looking. Genji, however, whispered many apologies for her. 'I knew you would help me,' he said. 'But of course the child is nothing out of the ordinary, and it seems a shame to give you all this trouble. You are doing what I suppose no Empress has ever done before. . . .' 'I thought nothing of coming, and indeed imagined it would be a mere family

[1] 7 p.m. [2] 11 p.m.

affair. If it is on my account that you have done things on this grand style, I assure you it is I not you who ought to feel embarrassed.' She looked so charming and still so young as she made this polite speech that Genji congratulated himself upon an occasion which, if it possessed no other importance, had at least the merit of bringing together in one room so many delightful women.

He would very much have liked the child's mother to take part in the ceremony, for he knew that it would pain her deeply not to be invited; but as the girl had been formally adopted by Murasaki, it was hard to see in what capacity the Lady from Akashi could be summoned, and very reluctantly he abandoned the idea.

For Tō no Chūjō it was extremely galling to hear the accounts of all these preparations and festivities. His own daughter Lady Kumoi was now at the height of her beauty, and to see her wasting her youth and charm in the dull seclusion of the home, while the Akashi girl's success was being bruited on every side, was naturally very hard for him to bear. Yūgiri's attachment to her seemed neither to have ripened nor, on the other hand, declined. To do anything that savoured of a wish to negotiate with him might now only lead to a humiliating rebuff—a risk that had not existed in the days when Yūgiri's passion was still open and declared. He felt that he had let things drift too far, and was indeed in these days more angry with himself than with Yūgiri.

The young man heard that his uncle no longer spoke of him with any asperity; but the harshness of years was not so easy to forget, and Yūgiri could not bring himself to plead for the termination of a quarrel which had been entirely of Chūjō's making. He therefore continued to behave exactly as before. Not but what his fidelity suffered

at one time and another from considerable strains and stresses. Naturally it did; but he could never forget the day upon which her nurses had taunted him with his light-blue dress, and he was determined that until he could come forward as a full-blown Counsellor he would make no further advances.

Genji disapproved extremely of the boy's solitary and unsettled mode of existence. Some time ago he had received a hint from the Minister of the Right that a proposition from Yūgiri would not be unwelcome; and now a similar intimation had come from a certain Prince Nakatsukasa. . . . Surely the boy would not allow a childish attachment to stand in the way of such solid alliances as these? He told Yūgiri of the two offers. 'One or the other you must certainly accept,' he said. 'Try to make up your mind as quickly as you can.' Yūgiri did not answer, but merely waited respectfully for his father to continue. 'I know that, in a way, it is rather absurd for me to advise you about things of this kind,' Genji said after a pause. 'I remember how tiresome I used to find my father the old Emperor's lectures on these and similar subjects. But I assure you that, irritating as it was at the time, his advice generally turned out to be perfectly sound, and I wish I had more often followed it. . . . But what I wanted to say to you now was this: your present unsettled way of living is doing your reputation a great deal of harm. Naturally every one assumes that a previous attachment of some kind is holding you back, and the impression most people are likely to get is that you have got tied up with some one so low-born or discreditable that you cannot possibly introduce her into your family. I know that this idea is the opposite of the truth; indeed no one could possibly accuse you of aiming too low. But it is now perfectly clear that you cannot get what you want. . . .

Under such circumstances the only thing to do is to take what one can get, and make the best of it. . . .

'I myself had just the same sort of trouble at your age. But things were even worse; for in the Palace one is hedged round by all kinds of rules and restrictions. All eyes were upon me, and I knew that the slightest indication on my part would be eagerly seized upon and exploited by those who stood to gain by my undoing. In consequence of this I was always extremely careful. . . . Yes. In spite of all my precautions I did once get into trouble, and it even looked at one time as though I had ruined myself for good and all. I was still low in rank then and had not particularly distinguished myself in any way. I felt that I was free to do as I chose, and that if things went wrong I had not much to lose. As a matter of fact it is just at such a moment in life that one makes the most far-reaching and irreparable mistakes; for it is then that passion is at its strongest, while the checks and restraints, that in middle age inevitably protect us against the wilder forms of folly, have not yet come into play. To suggest that you need advice on this subject is in no way derogatory to your intelligence; for in their relations with women people who show the utmost good sense in other matters seem constantly to get into the most inextricable mess. One of the difficulties is that we tend to be attracted precisely by those people with whom it is most impossible that we should be permanently connected. I can think of a case in which the lady's reputation was fatally injured and the man's happiness destroyed, not only in this world but probably in the next, by the fierce resentment which she bore against him in consequence of this youthful indiscretion.

'And one thing more: suppose you get married and find that the match is not altogether a success. There will be moments at which you will be tempted to throw the whole

thing over. But do not act rashly. Think out the situation afresh each time that it appears to you insupportable. Probably you will find that there is a very good reason for hanging on a little longer. Even if you have lost all affection for the lady herself, you may perhaps feel that for the sake of her parents you ought to make one more effort. . . . Or even if she has no parents or other supporters to whom you are under an obligation, you will very likely find on reflection that she has some small trick of speech or manner that still attracts you. It will in the end possibly be best both for you and for her if you can keep things going even in the most precarious way.'

So at moments of leisure used Genji to admonish the young man, never with any note of asperity in his tone. Nor did he once go beyond the vaguest general reflections and reminiscences.

The suggestion that at his father's advice he should at once transfer his affections to some quarter where they would be more acceptable struck Yūgiri as the most gratuitous piece of folly imaginable. Let them compel him if they chose, but at least refrain from insulting his love by veiling such senseless propositions under the cloak of kindness.

Meanwhile Kumoi noticed that her father, who for a long time past had eyed her with a strangely sorrowful look, now gazed at her more mournfully than ever. She felt that through her own fault something had gone wrong with her life, and ceased soon to hope for any kind of happiness ; but outwardly she showed no signs of this despair and seemed content to let her youth slip by unmarked. Yūgiri's letters, written at moments when a sudden access of longing compelled him to seek an outlet for his emotion, were as passionate as at the first day of their separation. But did they represent his true feelings ? Sometimes

she came near to doubting it, and had she possessed other lovers who gave more tangible proof of their devotion, it would have been easy for her to assume that Yūgiri's outpourings were utterly insincere. But an inexperienced girl cannot afford to doubt—that privilege is reserved for those with whom love has become a familiar distraction. His letters were her only interest, and she read them again and again. It soon reached Tō no Chūjō's ears that Prince Nakatsukasa had offered his daughter, and that the suggestion had not been ill-received by Genji. He drew Kumoi aside and spoke of this, with evident agitation. 'I am afraid this means that the young man has given way,' he said. 'No doubt Genji is offended at my not having accepted Yūgiri at the start, and is anxious to show that it is now too late for me to change my mind. For your sake I should be willing to humble myself before him to any extent; but I am afraid we should only be making ourselves ridiculous.' There were tears in his eyes while he spoke. Embarrassed, for she had never seen him weep before, Kumoi turned away her head, thus managing also to conceal her own tears, which by now were beginning gently to fall. What should he do? It was unendurable to watch her misery. And determined to make a last desperate appeal to Genji, he fled abruptly from the room. At the sound of his departure she turned her head, and coming to the window stood gazing after him. What would her lover think, what would he do, could he but have seen her father's strangely belated tears? It was not thus, she felt sure, that Yūgiri pictured the tyrant who stood between them. Just at this moment a messenger arrived. A letter from Yūgiri! Her first thought was that it would announce his engagement to this daughter of Prince Nakatsukasa, and for a while she had not the heart to open it. But when at last she did so she found that it was couched in terms

as passionate as ever before. His poem ran: 'Now faithlessness, that once was held a crime, rules all the world, and he a half-wit is accounted whose heart is steadfast for an hour.' There was not in the letter a hint of any intention such as her father had referred to, but the more she thought about it the more convinced she became that the rumour could not be without foundation. 'It seems that you, who preach so much of steadfast faith, yourself will soon be following the world's new treacherous way.' He had no notion what this could mean, and puzzled over it fruitlessly for many an hour.

CHAPTER V

FUJI NO URABA

DESPITE his friendship for the little Princess, Yūgiri had shown no interest in the recent proceedings at the New Palace. He had indeed lately heard that the 'watchman of the gate,'[1] worn out by a vigil so unexpectedly prolonged, already showed signs of collapse. The boy, extremely sensitive to rebuffs, would far rather that the first step should be taken by the other side, and though constantly planning to approach his uncle, he felt when it came to the point unable to do so unless Chūjō's manner towards him in some way indicated that the rumoured change of attitude had really taken place.

Meanwhile Kumoi, convinced that Yūgiri's engagement to the Nakatsukasa girl would soon be announced, was doing her best to wipe out from her thoughts all memory of the lover who had betrayed her. Thus, though in effect the way was now clear, a tangle of misunderstandings made it impossible for either side to advance. Her father, whose ill-judged obstinacy was responsible for the whole situation, was by now willing to make any compromise. Above all it was essential, at the cost of whatever humiliation, to forestall Prince Nakatsukasa's definite and final offer, which did not seem yet to have been made. For after all that had happened it might be exceedingly difficult to procure the girl an even tolerable alliance. Despite all the precautions of her family Kumoi's early friendship with Yūgiri had become known, and innocent though it

[1] Tō no Chūjō. Reference to a passage in the *Ise Monogatari*.

had been, she would inevitably share in the discredit which attaches to the jilted. He foresaw indeed that belated efforts to find her a husband would involve both him and the girl herself in even greater humiliations than would ensue from an immediate surrender. This time he determined to approach the boy himself; but though they occasionally met and were to outward appearances on perfectly good terms, he found it very difficult to embark suddenly upon such a subject as this. To send for Yūgiri on purpose to discuss the matter seemed to be making altogether too much fuss about it, and would indeed mark a point of surrender beyond what, even in his present mood, he was prepared to bring himself to. At last, however, circumstances afforded just such an occasion as he sought. On the 20th day of the third month, the anniversary of his mother's [1] death, a memorial service was held at the Gyokurakuji.[2] There was a great gathering of princes and noblemen, among whom Yūgiri, now grown to his full stature and to-day magnificently accoutred, cut no discreditable figure. The presence of Tō no Chūjō, who was of course in charge of the proceedings, always had the effect of damping Yūgiri's spirits, and his particularly subdued cautious manner did not to-day escape his uncle's notice. A special recitation of the scriptures was also held at Genji's expense, and Yūgiri himself, as grandson of the deceased, was naturally responsible for many of the arrangements. They were all going home late in the afternoon amid a shower of falling blossoms, when Tō no Chūjō, overcome by the memories which had crowded to his mind during this melancholy celebration, paused for a moment to gaze upon the scene about him. Yūgiri too was deeply moved by the beauty of the evening and had also halted. There was a rainy feeling in the

[1] Princess Omiya. [2] The mausoleum of the Fujiwara family.

air, and some of their companions shouted to them to come on quickly if they did not want to catch a wetting. Turning round Tō no Chūjō saw that, like himself, Yūgiri was spellbound by the sadness of the closing day, and pulling him gently by the sleeve he said : ' What does this mean ? All day you have been doing your best to avoid me. I should have thought that on such an occasion you would have been willing to call a truce. I feel that to-day I have reached a turning-point in my life. I am beginning to be an old man, and I cannot afford to lose the affection of those who are growing up around me. . . .' ' I remember,' Yūgiri answered, ' that before she died my grandmother begged me if I were ever in trouble to come first to you for advice. And I would gladly have done so, had you not made it clear that you had no wish at all to see me. . . .' But there the conversation ended ; for the wind had suddenly risen, bringing with it a violent storm of rain, and the whole party were obliged to make for home as fast as they could.

Never before had Tō no Chūjō addressed such words to him ; and though there was no direct allusion to the trouble over Kumoi, he could not help feeling that they were meant as a definite hint of encouragement. For Yūgiri's thoughts were continually occupied by this subject, and he was apt to see a reference to it in the most ordinary remarks. Of this he was conscious, and all night long he turned over in his mind what Chūjō had said to him.

But in point of fact Yūgiri's years-long patience had at last triumphed completely. If there was a slight further delay it was only because Tō no Chūjō was waiting for a not too inappropriate occasion upon which to make his full and unqualified surrender.

Early in the fourth month, one evening when the unusual magnificence of the wistaria in his courtyard (it had

never been so profuse in blossom or so splendid in colour as this year) induced him to invite a few friends with whom to feast and make music, when the dusk was already gathering and the beauty of the flowers, as they gleamed in the half-night, was even more dazzling than before, Tō no Chūjō plucked a spray of the blossom and asked his son Kasiwagi to deliver it to Yūgiri with the message: 'I should very much like to continue our conversation of a few days ago, and if you have nothing better to do, please come round and see me. . . .' Attached to the wistaria spray was the poem: 'The wistaria in my garden is at its deepest hue, and now not many nights are left in which to see it shining through the dusk.' Yūgiri could not for a moment doubt that this was the signal he had waited for. He thanked Kashiwagi for bringing the message and handed to him the poem: 'Alas, I fear lest groping through the dusk I now may miss the hour when these deep-coloured blossoms shed their splendour on the night.' 'I am ashamed of this poem,' he said to Kashiwagi, 'and beg you to amend it in any way you can.' 'Are you not coming straight back with me?' said the other. 'No,' answered Yūgiri decisively. 'My retainers would be a trouble to you,' and he sent Kashiwagi away. This took place in Genji's presence, and looking at the poem, he said: 'This of course is all you could desire. Well, I am glad it has happened at last. No doubt the other day's proceedings awakened in him the feeling that he had often treated his mother very badly, and his present surrender is a sort of propitiation. . . .' This confident, off-hand tone jarred on Yūgiri. 'I don't think this invitation means anything out of the ordinary,' he replied, blushing. 'The wistaria is in bloom and they are having some music in the courtyard. It is quite natural that he should send for me. . . .' 'Well, in any case,' replied Genji, 'he is evidently anxious to have you there,

or he would not have sent Kashiwagi on purpose. You had better go at once.' To a casual observer Yūgiri would have appeared at this moment apathetic—impassively obedient. But his heart within staggered with excitement, and in sheer intensity of expectation he almost fainted away. 'Wait a minute!' his father called after him. 'That dark cloak will not do at all! It was well enough while you were a young nobody and did not attend the Council. But now you have every right to make a better show. . . . Let me lend you something,' and sending a servant to his wardrobe, he presently displayed a whole pile of the most magnificent Court cloaks, one of which Yūgiri carried off to his own room. By the time his toilet was complete twilight had turned to darkness. He hurried to his uncle's house, arriving just when Tō no Chūjō, to his chagrin, had decided that it was useless to expect him. He was led into the house by a band of some seven or eight young men, headed by Kashiwagi. A seat of honour had been set apart for him by Tō no Chūjō, who for the moment was absent, having gone to change his Court hat for a more comfortable form of head-dress. His wife and some young ladies-in-waiting helped him to change. 'You must take a peep at our new guest,' he said to them. 'I saw him arriving a moment ago. He has really grown up into a most distinguished-looking young man; and he dresses admirably. He looks to me as though he would turn out to have more strength and decision of character than his father. Genji of course was always very good company; when one is with him, one is indeed so completely carried away by his high spirits and charm that the worries and difficulties of everyday life seem suddenly to lose all reality. But in public affairs he seems to me to suffer from a certain lack of earnestness, of gravity. . . . However, that may be a fault on the right side. Certainly this

son of his has not inherited any such defect; I hear that he is a better scholar than his father, and is indeed a most serious and persevering character. . . .' Tō no Chūjō now rejoined his guests, and after the usual compliments had been exchanged he said to Yūgiri: 'You should have come when the spring flowers were at their best. It was an astonishing sight this year. Every imaginable colour. But the spring treated us badly; never has its stay been so short. And now all that is left us to console ourselves with is these wonderful blossoms here, which are already almost in summer bloom. For my part I take an immense delight in them, and I hope that to you as well their colour has to-night a special significance . . .'[1] and he smiled reassuringly. The moon had now risen, and having admired by its light what little was to be seen of the wistaria blossom, they settled down again to music and drink. Seeing that Yūgiri's shyness required overcoming by some more drastic procedure than mere friendly encouragement, Tō no Chūjō affected to be more drunk than he actually was, and under cover of this pretence pressed the drink upon Yūgiri with a boisterous insistence. But the boy was determined to keep all his wits about him, and over and over again refused. 'I hear,' said Tō no Chūjō, 'that you are becoming such a scholar as in these latter days we never hoped to see again. Perhaps that is why you are so cold towards your old acquaintances who can boast no such world-wide reputation. But even in your learned books I fancy there is a good deal about "family visits," and there is a certain person,[2] very dear to those of your persuasion, who made such small formalities the groundwork of his teaching. You must know far more about all this than I do, and it can only be for some very particular reason that you so determinedly avoid your uncle's house. . .' Such

[1] Purple, a presage of high rank. [2] Confucius.

a complaint came quite naturally amid the general sentimentality induced by wine and music. 'Come,' answered Yūgiri, 'did nothing else attach me to you, the memory of my mother and grandmother would alone make me ready to serve you with my last breath, and I cannot conceive what I have done to merit such a reproach. It was you who in the first place gave me to understand that I was not welcome. . . .' Tō no Chūjō held his peace; but when a suitable opportunity occurred he rose to his feet and sang the old song: 'If like the leaf . . .,'[1] while Kashiwagi, evidently at his father's bidding, plucked a spray of wistaria blossom, the deepest-coloured and longest he could find, and twined it round the guest's wine-cup. Yūgiri modestly protested; whereupon Tō no Chūjō recited the verse: 'That as token of kinship this flower you should invoke I waited[2] till the blossom hung lower than the pine-boughs; then at last I humbled my pride.'

Yūgiri, holding the cup, made a slight obeisance, and answered: 'Strange that through so many dewy spring-times I was doomed to pass before I met the season when this flower for me its blossom should unfold.' So saying he handed the cup to Kashiwagi, and as it went the round every one in turn produced the best he could in the way of a poem. But amid the confused revel it was not likely that anything very good should come to light, and the verses that followed were even more ragged than those I have already quoted. The moon was only seven days old, and across the mirror of the silent lake hung a thin veil of mist. The trees still lacked their full profusion of summer green, and it was over bare and lonely-looking boughs that the wistaria, not merged as at a later season in the general

[1] 'If like the leaf of the wistaria through which the sun darts his rays transparently you give your heart to me, I will no more mistrust you.'

[2] The usual pun: *matsu* = 'pine-tree,' and 'wait.'

mass of leafage, hung its heavy loads of blossom. Kōbai, whose voice was always in request upon such occasions, sang 'The Hedge of Reeds'[1] very charmingly. 'Come,' broke in Tō no Chūjō, 'no one has broken down any hedges here!' and next time the refrain came he drowned it with the words: 'Welcome to this ancient house!'[2] Soon all trace of embarrassment on either side had completely disappeared, and the party was kept up with a great deal of noisy singing and other merriment till a very late hour in the night. At last Yūgiri thought the time had come for a hint on his side, and pretending to be much more drunk than he really was, he said to Tō no Chūjō: 'I am afraid I am not good for much more of this. Could you possibly allow me to sleep here to-night? My head goes round, and I doubt whether, even if I managed to set out for home, I should ever get there safely.' 'Kashiwagi!' cried Tō no Chūjō, 'a bed for Yūgiri! I would see to it myself, but I am already far more drunk than an old person of my age has any right to be, and I must ask you to continue the concert without me.' So saying, he went straight to his room. 'I know what it is,' said Kashiwagi, turning to Yūgiri. '"You came to see the flowers, and with the flowers you would stay." I'll do what I can for you. But it may not be so easy as you suppose.' 'This is no wild fancy of the moment,' answered Yūgiri. 'Is not the pine-tree called "the lover of these flowers," and does he not all the year "wait changeless till at their own time the blossoms come"? Bring me to her. . . .'

Kashiwagi was not sure that this was what his father had intended, and was somewhat loath to take so great a responsibility; but he greatly admired Yūgiri and had always hoped

[1] 'About that broken place in the reed-hedge, in the front hedge, some one has told my mother. I think it was that chatterbox my younger brother's wife. For she saw you climbing over, and she it must have been who told.'

[2] From another old song.

that matters would end in this way. It was therefore without any great misgiving that he now led the way to his sister's room. . . .

Next day was the Festival of Buddha's Baptism.[1] The priests carrying the sacred image arrived somewhat late, and it was evening when the little girls sent from the various quarters of Genji's household arrived with their thank-offerings and alms. This part of the ceremony was carried out in Genji's palace exactly as at Court, while Genji's levée on the evening of the festival was even better attended than that held by the Emperor; so that the priests in charge of the image, who had got through the ordeal of appearing before the Emperor pretty comfortably, felt much less sure of themselves at this second and, as it seemed to them, far more critical gathering. But these proceedings did not in the least interest Yūgiri, who at an early hour put on his best clothes and hurried away towards Tō no Chūjō's house. Several of the younger ladies-in-waiting at the New Palace, without being actually in love with him, had always taken a considerable interest in his doings, and were not best pleased to hear that his prolonged bachelordom had at last come to a close.

The accumulated longing of years, satisfied at last in a manner beyond the wildest dreams of either, made the union of these two young people into a basket[2] that certainly let no water through. Tō no Chūjō, too, liked Yūgiri more and more as he got to know him better, and lavished upon him every sort of attention. He could not help still feeling a

[1] 8th day of the fourth month. Images of the Infant Buddha (four inches high, with right hand raised towards the sky) are carried in procession and sprinkled with water. The festival commemorates the occasion when the Rain Dragons sprinkled the head of the Infant Buddha.

[2] There is a proverb 'It is no use pouring water into a basket.' *Augo* means 'union,' and also 'basket,' 'wicker panier.'

little sore at having had to surrender in so abject a manner. At the same time he had a great respect for the tenacity and single-heartedness which Yūgiri had displayed in the face of every discouragement during these last years, and he bore the boy no grudge at all. There was a certain feeling against him in the household, for Kumoi had now grown to be indubitably prettier and in every way more interesting than her sister, Lady Chūjō. This had for some time past excited the jealousy of Lady Chūjō's mother and of such gentlewomen as sided with her; and this faction in the household did its best to keep Yūgiri in his place. But Kumoi's mother [1] and many other people were delighted to hear of the engagement.

The Akashi Princess's actual move into the Crown Prince's palace was fixed for the 20th of the fourth month. Meanwhile Murasaki expressed a desire to visit the August Birthplace.[2] The other ladies of the household were eager to accompany her; but she did not like the idea of a huge miscellaneous excursion, and in the end she confined the party to her own gentlewomen and servants. Even as it was there were twenty coaches, but everything was done as unostentatiously as possible, and the number of outriders was extremely small. The visit to the Shrine was made very early on the morning of the Festival,[3] and Murasaki was back in time to view the processions from the usual Stand. There was a good deal of rough hustling and pushing among the grooms and outriders of various ladies, each of whom was determined to secure a prominent place for her equipage; but as soon as Murasaki's carriage came in sight the rest fell back respectfully to let her pass. Genji,

[1] A princess with whom Tō no Chūjō had had an intrigue in early days. Subsequently she morganatically married a Provincial Inspector.

[2] The place at the Kamo Shrine where the Goddess Tamayorihime gave birth to Wake-ikazuchi, the Thunder God. It is this event which the Kamo Festival commemorates.

[3] Fourth month.

who was already waiting in the Stand, could not but recollect how at that other Kamo Festival years ago there had been an awkward clash of coaches. 'I am glad you got through without any trouble,' he said. 'There is often a good deal of ill-feeling on these occasions. I am afraid the favourite of the moment is apt to abuse her power, sweeping mercilessly aside all who stand in her path. Yūgiri's mother was by no means given to self-assertion. Yet her death was due to the resentment she incurred by allowing her servants to behave with insolence during one of these holiday encounters. It was the present Empress's mother who suffered upon that occasion; and it is strange that whereas her child has reached the highest position to which any lady can aspire, poor Aoi's son has only just begun to get on, even in the most modest way. We must never forget how uncertain everything in this world is. I have no reason to suppose that things will not now go smoothly with me to the end. But should you survive me, you might easily find yourself in a very precarious position. . . .'

A number of princes and noblemen had now assembled near Murasaki's Stand to pay her their respects, and Genji joined them. Kashiwagi was to-day the representative [1] of the Imperial Bodyguard, and it was at his father's house that the gentlemen who now accompanied him had that morning assembled.

Koremitsu's daughter, who, as will be remembered, now held a post in the Bedchamber, was also present as representative of her office. She was just now having a prodigious success at Court, and to-day her coach was attracting as great a throng of admirers as that of any lady from the Palace, the Crown Prince's apartments or the Sixth Ward.[2] Among those who paid their respects to her this morning

[1] Each of the Palace departments was officially represented at the Kamo Festival.

[2] Genji's palace.

was Yūgiri. He had courted her in old days, in a somewhat half-hearted way it is true, but the news of his sudden engagement to the daughter of so eminent a house piqued her more than she would have expected. 'If on no other day, then surely with this wreath [1] about your brow, lady, you call to mind that once we met!' [2] Such was the poem that he handed into her coach, and distracted though she was by the importunities of her admirers, she was touched that he should remember her at such a moment, and despite the fact that a carriage-seat is no place for writing verse, she answered him with the poem: 'That "hollyhock" spells "meeting" is for scholars to conclude. They know it not who pluck the flowers, nor they that weave them as a crown about their brow.' It was not meant seriously; but Yūgiri felt that it was a snub and retired, somewhat surprised to find that in his present happiness any other woman's reply could make the slightest difference to him.

It was usual, when the Heir Apparent's consort was of very immature age, for her to be accompanied at Court by her mother or guardian. Murasaki had adopted the Akashi Princess in its infancy, and according to the usual practice it would now be she who followed the girl to the Eastern Palace. But Genji would not sanction a plan that involved continual and prolonged absence from home, and the opportunity seemed an excellent one for restoring the child to the care of her true mother, the Lady of Akashi. Murasaki had long felt that the separation of the girl from her mother, though from a worldly point of view advantageous to her, was an arrangement too inhumane to be otherwise than temporary. The little Princess herself, now that she was of an age to understand the situation, was obviously becoming more and more dissatisfied with it. To stand in

[1] Wreath of hollyhock, *ao-hi*; also means 'Day of meeting.'
[2] *Katsu*, once; *katsura*, 'laurel', also used for festival wreaths.

the way of a reunion which promised so much happiness on both sides was out of the question, and on her own initiative Murasaki said to Genji : ' Would it not be possible for the Lady from Akashi to go with the child to the Eastern Palace ? She still needs a lot of looking after, and almost all her ladies are far too young to be much use in that respect. She has her nurses, of course, who will do all they can. But there are many points which people of that kind cannot reasonably be expected to decide. Were I myself to take charge of her I could not possibly be on the spot all the time. I would much rather she had some one who could give undivided attention. . . .' What a comfort that she took so sensible a view ! Genji hastened to inform the mother of this decision, and her delight was touching to behold. Indeed, her only anxiety was lest after all these years of retirement she should herself have become too dowdy to mingle with the bevy of resplendent young creatures who had been chosen for her daughter's service, and she began hastily providing herself with a new outfit.

Her mother, the old recluse's wife, heard with profound relief that the little girl's prospects were now finally assured, and henceforward she clung desperately to life, despite many infirmities and troubles, in the one hope that she might see her grandchild again before she went down into the grave. But she lived a long way from the Court, and at last began to wonder disconsolately whether the meeting would ever really take place.

On the night of the actual Presentation Murasaki accompanied the child in the hand-litter which was to convey her to the Eastern Palace. It was open to the Lady of Akashi to follow on foot, and as far as she herself was concerned she would have been ready enough to do so. But she feared that her presence would spoil the effect of the Princess's entry, and remained for the time being in her

own apartments, feeling, as may well be imagined, very unwanted and forlorn. The ceremony of introduction was, at Genji's request, performed with as little publicity as possible. But it is in any case an elaborate affair, such as is bound to arouse a good deal of interest. While dressing the little Princess in all the finery that this trying occasion demanded, Murasaki could not help passionately wishing that this lovely child were really hers. And to Genji as well as to Yūgiri the same thought occurred: if only this one thing were not lacking, surely Lady Murasaki would be the happiest, the most fortunate woman on earth!

After three days she left the Palace, and on the way out met the child's own mother, who had now come to take charge. They got into conversation, and Murasaki said: 'Seeing the little Princess in these grown-up clothes has reminded me how long it is since you first came to live with us. I think, having been neighbours all these years, we ought by now to know one another a little better than we do. . . .' It was not an easy conversation to get started, but Murasaki's manner was so obviously kindly and sympathetic that a friendship was soon struck up between them. Murasaki, for her part, was so much attracted by the other's manner and way of speaking that she soon well understood Genji's admiration for her; while the Lady of Akashi could not fail to be delighted by Murasaki's noble bearing and faultless beauty. She felt it to be perfectly natural that among all the women who had received Genji's favours, this lady should always have held the unquestioned supremacy; she thought indeed at this moment that even to have been set beside her as the humblest participant in Genji's affection was an honour of which she might justly be proud.

Murasaki's return was attended by great pomp and solemnity. She was permitted the use of a hand-litter, a privilege usually restricted to the Emperor's consorts, and the Lady

of Akashi, as she watched her leave the Palace, once more felt for a moment painfully conscious of her own utter inferiority.

The sight of her lovely child, waiting for her with a doll-like and neat composure, was more than she could bear, and so near are the outward signs of grief and joy that no one seeing her then could have guessed that the tears which now rushed to her eyes were those of the purest and tenderest delight. For years it had seemed as though fate were utterly against her, and she were destined to drift on only into greater depression and obscurity. But now a brighter prospect had opened, and remembering her pious father's constant prayers and oblations she could not but think that it was the God of Sumiyoshi who had at last set her fortunes on a fairer course.

The little Princess had been so carefully brought up by Murasaki that she needed very little guidance Every one in the Eastern Palace was at once charmed by her beauty and friendly disposition, not least the Crown Prince himself. For, mere child though he was, he could not fail to perceive that she far outshone all other companions whom fate had put in his way. Those whose designs had been frustrated by the little Princess's arrival made a point of speaking disparagingly in his Highness's presence of the child's mother, saying with mock sympathy that it would be a great handicap to her at Court to have so homely a creature always at her side. But such remarks had no effect. Not only was the child unusually quick-witted, but it soon became apparent that she already possessed considerable will and character of her own. Her every whim was now gratified, and as many of her ladies had admirers among the most fashionable young noblemen at Court, her rooms became the scene of the most dazzling fêtes and receptions. It was indeed all the Lady of Akashi could do to keep the ladies-in-waiting in proper trim for all these festivities, after she had attended

to the Princess's outfit and made the necessary household arrangement. Murasaki managed occasionally to visit them, and was delighted to find that there was in the Lady of Akashi's manner towards her no longer any of the distrust and coldness which had for so long made it wellnigh impossible for them to meet.

Genji, who could never think of himself as living to any great age, was profoundly thankful that he had now provided for his daughter in a manner which seemed to make her happiness assured. And even Yūgiri, whose excellent qualities of heart had seemed at one time likely to condemn him to a state of permanent unsettledness and despondency, was now happily provided for. . . . It seemed in fact to Genji at this time that all the worst dangers and difficulties of his life had been successfully overmounted, and that he might now even manage to arrive at the finish without any very serious disaster. Were he to die now his only anxiety would be on Murasaki's behalf ; but so long as Akikonomu, who had always regarded her as a second mother, retained her influence, Murasaki was not likely to come to any great harm. Moreover, as foster-mother of a future Empress she would be certain of a considerable position at Court even in the event of Akikonomu's death or retirement.

He sometimes had qualms about the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers. She, poor thing, certainly did not have a very gay time of it ; but for the moment she had Yūgiri to keep an eye on her. Generally speaking, he could remember no time at which his affairs had been in such hopeful trim.

Next year would see his fortieth birthday, and he heard that both at Court and in the country at large great preparations were afoot for celebrating this event. Already in the autumn of the present year he was proclaimed equal in rank to an Imperial Parent, and his fiefs and patronage

were correspondingly increased. His actual power had for a long time past been absolute and complete, so that these changes brought him no great advantage. Indeed, in one respect they were inconvenient ; for in defiance of a very well-established precedent he was burdened with the special retinue of his new rank, which, magnificent though it made his public appearances, rendered his comings and goings in the Palace very burdensome, and he was no longer able to meet the Emperor so often as he desired.

Ryōzen still felt acutely the illegality of his own position and would at any moment have been prepared to resign the Throne, had not Genji refused to sanction such a step, pointing out that it would have a disastrous effect on public opinion if it became known that the true line of succession had been impaired.

Tō no Chūjō of course succeeded to the position which Genji had vacated, and Yūgiri at last became a Palace Counsellor. On the day when the new officers went to Court to receive their Investiture Tō no Chūjō was greatly struck by the improvement in the boy's carriage and appearance. For the first time he felt that Kumoi would after all be far better off with this young man as her devoted slave and protector than she would ever have been in the Palace, where she could not at best hope for more than a perfunctory share of the Emperor's attention.

Yūgiri's new estate required more spacious quarters than were available in his father's palace, and soon after his promotion he moved into his grandmother's old house in the Third Ward. It was somewhat out of repair, but the damage was soon put to rights, and the Princess's former apartments were modified to suit the requirements of the newly-married pair. For both of them the place was full of old and tender memories. They could remember as clumps of scraggy, freshly planted trees, plantations that now yielded an ample

shade, and one bed of miscanthus, planted by the old Princess herself, had by now grown so thick and tangled that they were obliged to thin it out and cut it back, lest it should keep the sun off the plants around. The moat too needed clearing out and, when fresh water-plants had been set in it, looked very inviting. One lovely autumn evening the young pair stood by the water, talking of their childhood and of all the tribulations that were now happily overcome. Kumoi, among much that it was delightful to recall, could not help remembering several small incidents that had seemed to her of no significance at the time, but now made her somewhat uncomfortable in the presence of her grandmother's old servants, most of whom had joyfully welcomed the opportunity of returning to their old positions. Yūgiri, gazing into the water, recited the poem : ' Guardian of secrets, thou only could'st tell whither her soul is fled, but speakest not, O rock-fed wellspring of our house.' To this Kumoi answered : ' Of her that is departed no shadow haunts thy waters, O springlet, as calm and unrepentant thy waves flow onward to their goal ! '

At this moment Tō no Chūjō, drawn hither by the beauty of the autumn leaves, came into the garden for a while on his way back from the Palace. The house, full once more of movement and life, looked (thought Tō no Chūjō) just as he had known it on many an autumn day in his parents' life-time, and as he wandered from one familiar spot to another it affected him strangely to find those whom he had recently thought of as mere children playing the part of dignified masters and possessors amid the scenes where he himself had once submitted to his elders' rule. Yūgiri too seemed slightly embarrassed by the situation ; he blushed noticeably when giving orders, and his manner was oddly subdued. They were, thought Tō no Chūjō, a singularly handsome and well-matched pair. Kumoi, indeed, was no very exceptional

beauty; but the boy was certainly as graceful and well-built as any young man he knew. Glancing among some papers covered with practice-writing, Chūjō noticed the poems about the wellspring which the young pair had just composed. Deeply moved, he said: 'I too have it in my heart to invoke the spirit of this familiar stream; but for one who stands so near the margin of the grave. . . .'[1] Nevertheless, he took a brush and wrote the verse: 'Long must it be indeed since the old tree withered; for already its seedlings spread their green roots across the shaded earth.' Some of the old Princess's aged servants were sitting in a group near by, croaking mysterious tales of vanished wonders. Among them was Yūgiri's old nurse. She had never forgiven Tō no Chūjō for his former harshness towards her young master, and overhearing the recital of his 'seedling' poem, she was unable to restrain her indignation and burst out with the lines: 'Some of us have tended these two seedlings since first they put forth leaf, and have not only at this last hour discovered that they cast upon the earth a pleasant shade.' This encouraged several of the other aged dames to vent their views, and Yūgiri for his part was much amused by their quaint impromptus. But Kumoi found their fulsome compliments somewhat embarrassing, and was glad when their inspiration ran out.

Late in the tenth month the Emperor declared his intention of visiting Genji in the New Palace. Knowing that the maple leaves would be particularly lovely at this season, he invited the ex-Emperor Suzaku to accompany him. The visit of a reigning sovereign and his predecessor to the house of a subject had seldom if ever occurred before, and the event aroused great interest throughout the country. The simultaneous reception of two such august visitors was a matter that required much forethought, and the

[1] He speaks of himself as though he were an old man.

dazzling preparations which Genji set afoot cost him hours of deliberation.

The guests arrived at the hour of the Serpent.[1] The first ceremony was a parade of the Bodyguards of the Right and Left, who lined up beside their horses exactly as at the Imperial Race-meeting in the fifth month. Early in the afternoon the Emperor proceeded to the Main Hall. All the plank bridges and galleries along which he passed were carpeted with costly brocades, and his progress was screened from the public gaze by heavy canvas curtains painted with landscape scenery. At the Eastern Lake the party embarked on boats, and the head cormorant-fisher from the Palace, combined with Genji's men, gave a display with his birds, who brought up a number of small gibel in their beaks. This fishing display was not part of the original programme, but was improvised at the last moment, lest the royal personages should be bored on the way from the parade-ground to the main palace. Every knoll in the gardens was crowned by the scarlet of maple leaves ; but nowhere were they in better colour than in Akikonomu's Western Garden, and in order that his Majesty might in passing have a better view of them, part of the wall that divided her domain from the Great Gardens had been hastily removed.

The seats of the two visitors had been placed side by side in the Great Hall, with Genji's at a considerable distance ; but at the Emperor's request Genji's seat was brought into line with theirs. This treatment, which to those present appeared in the highest degree flattering, was indeed far less than the Emperor would have liked to do for Genji, before whom the laws of filial piety demanded that he should kneel in humble reverence. The fish caught on the lake were to be submitted to the Emperor's approval by the

[1] 9 a.m.

Colonel of the Bodyguard of the Left. Meanwhile Genji's falconers returned from the Northern Fields with a string of birds which were handed over to the Colonel of the other Guard, who entering the Main Hall by the eastern doors submitted the game kneeling at one side of the steps,[1] while the fish were displayed on the other side. Tō no Chūjō, at his Majesty's command, directed the cooking of these viands, which were served to the Emperor himself, while the princes and noblemen in attendance were offered a repast of the most appetizing kind, in which every dish was served in a manner to some degree out of the ordinary. When every one had had as much as he wanted and dusk was setting in, the musicians were sent for. It was not a formal concert, but there was some very lively dancing by various young pages from Court. The ex-Emperor Suzaku could not but remember the dancing at the Festival of Red Leaves years ago, an occasion which often came back to his mind. When the Ga-ō-on [2] was played, Tō no Chūjō's sons, ten in all, danced to it with such success that the Emperor rewarded them with the gift of his own cloak, which Tō no Chūjō received on their behalf with an elaborate *budō*.[3] Genji was meanwhile recalling the day when he had been Tō no Chūjō's partner in the Dance of the Blue Waves, and plucking a chrysanthemum he addressed to him the poem : ' Though like this flower you have as time goes by put on a deeper hue, do you recall a day when in the autumn wind your sleeve flapped close to mine ? ' Yes, then indeed (thought Tō no Chūjō) they were partners, and there was little to choose between them in rank and prospects. But now, despite the very important position he held, he knew well enough that, compared with Genji, he was in popular

[1] Of the Imperial Dais.
[2] 'Thanking for the Prince's Favour,' a Chinese dance.
[3] A form of obeisance so elaborate as to be almost a dance.

estimation a very insignificant person indeed. 'Not to a flower shall I compare thee, who hidest amid the pomp of regal clouds, but to a star that shines out of an air stiller and clearer than our own.' Such was Tō no Chūjō's answer. By now the evening wind was stirring among the red leaves that lay heaped upon the courtyard floor, weaving them into patterns of brown and red. Here some pretty little boys, children of various noble houses, were imitating in play the dances of their elders. They wore blue and crimson tunics, and shirts of yellow with dark-red facings. Apart from their little Court hats they had no formal insignia, and it was a pretty sight to see them capering about amid the maple leaves, through which the setting sun now slanted its last rays. The professional musicians were not called upon to give any very exacting performance, and at an early hour the private playing began, led by the Emperor, who sent to the Palace Library for a selection of zitherns. Prompted by the beauty of the season and hour, one after another of the great personages there present called for his instrument and gave vent upon it to the feelings of the moment. Suzaku was deeply moved at hearing the familiar tones of Uda no Hōshi.[1] Turning to the Emperor he recited the verse: 'Though, watcher of the woods, through many rainy autumns I have passed, such tints as these it never was my lot in any devious valley to behold.' He said this in his usual tone of gentle complaint. The Emperor answered: 'You speak as though mere leaves were on the ground; here rather has autumn woven a brocade that, could it be an heirloom, after-ages would covet to possess.'

Now that he was grown to full manhood the Emperor's likeness to Genji was astonishingly complete. Equally striking was his resemblance to Yūgiri. The latter of course had not that complete self-possession and authority of

[1] Name of a famous Japanese zithern.

manner which His Majesty had naturally acquired during his years of rule; but Yūgiri had distinctly the better complexion. He was now called upon to play the flute; among the courtiers who, drawn up along the steps, were singing the words of the tune was Tō no Chūjō's son Kōbai, long famous for the beauty of his voice. It was indeed a memorable occasion, and one which it seemed that some special Providence must have contrived.

CHAPTER VI

WAKANA

('YOUNG SHOOTS')

PART I

FOR years past the ex-Emperor Suzaku had been ailing, though it was hard to say exactly what was wrong with him. Soon after his visit to Genji's palace he became much worse, and began preparing himself for admission to the priesthood. He would indeed long ago have entered a monastery, had not his mother Lady Kōkiden, masterful as ever in her extreme old age, obstinately opposed such a step. But now she was dead, and the only remaining difficulty was the question of his family.

Oborozuki remained childless; but Lady Jōkyōden had borne him four children: one boy (the present Heir Apparent) and three girls. But he had another daughter, born to him by a certain Princess Wistaria, a younger sister of Lady Fujitsubo. Suzaku was extremely fond of this princess, and their daughter, Princess Nyosan, was undoubtedly his favourite child. But under the influence of Kōkiden, who had subsequently thrust Oborozuki upon him, he kept Nyosan's mother very much in the background. After his abdication her life became more than ever dull and purposeless. In a short while she pined away and died.

Nyosan was, at the point we have reached in our story, about thirteen years old. Already the retreat that Suzaku had built for himself on the Western Hills was nearing completion; soon he would be immured for ever, and his one anxiety was to get this child started in life before he disappeared. The first consideration was her Initiation,

which could not any longer be delayed. When Suzaku gave his children toys, it was always Nyosan who had the first choice, the others never getting the smallest trinket unless she had first refused it. You may imagine then with what care he now ransacked his treasury for rare and costly objects that might add splendour to the coming celebration.

Hearing that Suzaku was on the point of departure from the City, his son the Heir Apparent, accompanied by Lady Jōkyōden, came to pay him a farewell visit. Suzaku had never cared much for this Lady Jōkyōden, who had indeed been imposed upon him solely out of political considerations ; but as mother of the future sovereign she was a person of great consequence at Court, and there were now many matters that he was glad to talk over with her. Having discussed his son's future, about which he felt no forebodings, he said to his visitors : ' It is the girls that I am worried about. I cannot imagine what will become of them. I have so often seen this sort of thing happen before. It is torture to foresee in every detail how they will be taken advantage of and insulted. When I say " they," of course all this does not really apply to your children, you will no doubt see to it that they get properly settled. It is about Nyosan that I am chiefly troubled. I wish you would undertake to look after her. . . .' But this was asking a good deal. Nyosan's mother, for whom the Emperor cared far more than for Jōkyōden, had behaved very disagreeably to her when their rivalry was at its height, and though Jōkyōden had no intention of avenging herself upon a defenceless orphan, she saw no reason why she of all people should be expected to assume responsibility in the matter.

Day and night Suzaku brooded over the future of this favourite child. Meanwhile his weakness steadily increased,

and by the end of the year he was no longer able to leave his bed. To visitor after visitor he poured out the same tale of perplexity, and received much sympathy, though nothing in the way of practical suggestions. Genji sent frequently to enquire and even promised to come in person, but ultimately sent his son Yūgiri instead. 'I am afraid your father has a grudge against me,' said Suzaku. 'I have myself always regarded him with the utmost affection; but at one time the powers arrayed against him were very strong, and I allowed certain measures to be taken. . . . People are always coming here and warning me to be on my guard. . . . "Some day he will find a way of getting even with you," they say. "Many a man has waited far longer than this to settle an old score," and so on. But I am bound to say nothing comes of it. I cannot remember a single occasion on which Genji has shown me the slightest trace of ill-will. It is of course to him that I should most naturally turn for help in my present difficulties. But I know how trying people are when they talk about their own children; and so I have ended by discussing the matter with all and sundry, rather than with Genji, whose sympathy I was particularly anxious not to lose. But my visit to his palace this autumn made me feel how unfortunate it is that I see him so seldom. I wish you could persuade him to come here one day. . . .' 'I am sure he would be delighted to come,' answered Yūgiri. 'Of course I know nothing of what happened between you in the past. But lately he has frequently discussed political affairs with me, and I have never heard him mention you in a way to suggest that he bears you ill-will for what happened in the past. . . .' While Yūgiri spoke, a new idea entered the ex-Emperor's head. How would it be to confide to this competent and agreeable young man the care of the daughter whose future was causing him so much anxiety? 'I hear you have now

got a house of your own,' he said to Yūgiri. 'I have known for a long time past of your difficulties over this matter and was extremely sorry for you. However, now your troubles have all ended in a manner completely satisfactory to you, I suppose. But what I feel about it is that really, after all that happened, Tō no Chūjō hardly deserves you as his son-in-law. Indeed, I must confess, in that respect I feel somewhat jealous of him. . . .' For a moment Yūgiri was mystified; but then he remembered having heard that Suzaku was in a great state about one of his daughters. . . . However, he was shy of letting it be seen that he understood this hint, and only answered: 'I am sure you need not be jealous of anything that concerns me. As you know well enough, I am a very insignificant person. . . .'

That was the end of the conversation. Some of the gentlewomen who had caught a glimpse of Yūgiri as he passed were loud in their admiration of his costume and person. But an older lady-in-waiting croaked out indignantly: 'Nothing to what his father was at that age! You don't see such men nowadays. He really *was* a handsome young gentleman.' 'She is quite right,' said Suzaku, overhearing this outburst. 'There will never be any one like Genji. He has aged, of course; but I think that the extraordinary vividness and radiance of his expression—the quality which in his infancy won for him the name of Hikaru [1]—has if anything increased as time goes by. His face when in repose has now a nobility and dignity that in his younger and more irresponsible days were lacking; but I still think that he is never so attractive as when laughing and talking sheer nonsense. Then he is the real Genji whose like has never been seen in the world before.'

One day when the little princess had been brought to his bedside, seeing her so childlike and helpless, the ex-

[1] The Shining One.

Emperor exclaimed: 'What I should really like would be for some one to take a fancy to her and bring her up privately, with a view to making her his wife later on. Then I should feel that both her education and her subsequent career were safely provided for. . . .' He called the head nurse to him and having discussed one or two matters connected with Nyosan's Initiation, he said to her presently: 'You have probably heard the story of Lady Murasaki's upbringing. I wish I could find some one who would adopt my little girl in that fashion. Outside the Imperial Family it is difficult to think of any one suitable; and in the Palace, Akikonomu has everything so much her own way that the other ladies of the Household come off very badly. If Nyosan had strong backing at Court, I might risk it; but as things are . . . I wish, by the way, I had thought of approaching this young Yūgiri while he was still available. I feel certain that he has a great future before him.' 'You would have had to think of this a very long time ago if you wished to secure Prince Yūgiri,' the nurse assured him. 'For years past he has been waiting for this daughter of Tō no Chūjō, and I do not think you would have found it an easy matter to interest him in any other proposal. Genji himself is far more promising. Of one thing you may be quite certain: if he once took a fancy to our young lady he would never abandon her. Why, I hear that despite all his other preoccupations he still goes on visiting Princess Asagao and all those other ladies about whom we used to hear so much in early days.' 'Come,' said Suzaku, 'the fact that so many youthful affairs are still in his hands does not particularly recommend him for our present purpose. . . .' But the idea stuck in his head. Although Nyosan would in Genji's household grow up as one among many, she would at least enjoy the advantage of having come there as a child, an orphan whose interests Genji was pledged to defend.

'If any one were looking for a place where a young girl could be sent to pick up a little knowledge of the world, I cannot imagine anywhere better than Genji's palace. I only wish that I could spend the little that remains to me of life in surroundings half so pleasant and entertaining! Were I a girl I should certainly have fallen in love with Genji. Indeed, when I was young I did feel something of the kind; and I entirely understand how it is that he carries everything before him. . . .' Suzaku paused. Perhaps he was thinking of his own failure with Oborozuki.[1]

The longer Suzaku reflected, the more difficult did it appear to find any one more promising than Genji. There was certainly no one else who could do more for her if he chose. And as for the other ladies in Genji's household—their presence would not necessarily be a disadvantage; Genji could easily prevent that, if he was by way of taking any trouble about her at all. A man living in retirement with plenty of time on his hands, of rare charm, settled habits—what more could be asked? One or two other names did, however, cross his mind. There was Prince Sochi. No one could say she was marrying beneath her, for he too was the child of an Emperor, and there was indeed in that way nothing to choose between them. But Suzaku regarded him as weak, frivolous, irresponsible; and there were stories. . . . No; certainly he would not do.

His mind roamed from possibility to possibility. For a moment he even considered Tō Dainagon, the Superintendent of his household, who would himself never have dreamed of applying for the Princess's hand, but had offered 'to look after her affairs,' in the event of her being left an orphan. And admirably he would do it, Suzaku felt sure, for this gentleman was a model of painstaking devotion. But he was, after all, a mere junior official, without influence or

[1] See vol. ii, p 125.

distinction of any kind. Things had indeed come to a pretty pass if for an Emperor's daughter no better match than this could be found! His thoughts again took a more ambitious turn. Oborozuki told him that her sister's son Kashiwagi was secretly anxious to form a connection with the Imperial House. Perhaps it was this ambition that kept him still unmarried, and though many people would have laughed at such aspirations, Suzaku was by no means ready to condemn them. They showed at least that Kashiwagi had definite aims in life, and this fact alone sufficed to mark him out from among the ordinary run of easy-going young courtiers who lived solely for the pleasures of the moment.

As a scholar his talents were respectable, and in the natural course of things he would one day be at the head of the Government. . . . A brilliant match for any other woman; but when it came to imagining him as Nyosan's husband, Kashiwagi (as indeed every one else of whom Suzaku thought) seemed somehow hopelessly inadequate. Indeed, he worried a thousand times more over Nyosan, who had already received numerous flattering offers, than over the other sisters who could scarcely muster one wretched suitor apiece.

The ex-Emperor might never have reached a decision at all, had not the Crown Prince taken a very firm line on the subject. The young man did not of course openly venture to advise his father on such a point; but it came round to Suzaku that his son was in the strongest possible way opposed to Nyosan's marrying a commoner.[1] The matter was one that did not merely concern her happiness, but would create a precedent and thus affect the stability of the Imperial Family.

The only course the Crown Prince favoured was one that

[1] I.e. not a member of the Imperial Family.

had already occurred to Suzaku : Genji must be persuaded to take charge of the girl.

At last Suzaku allowed his mind to be made up for him, and employed Sachūben,[1] the brother of Nyosan's head nurse, to obtain Genji's views on the matter. Genji had of course for some while past known that the question of Nyosan's future was tormenting the ex-Emperor, and was anxious to assist him. 'But there can be no suggestion of my adopting the child,' he said. 'The ex-Emperor is, I fear, failing rapidly, and no doubt in the ordinary course of things I shall survive him by a certain number of years. In that case I shall be glad to do what I can in a general way to help all his children. But I cannot accept a special responsibility for any particular child. . . . As for taking her as a concubine, considering the difference of age between us, the question is too absurd to discuss. However, there is no necessity for so strange a choice. Yūgiri, for example, has not got far at present ; but he has a brilliant future before him. . . . However, I quite see the difficulty there. Yūgiri is a faithful fellow, and perhaps at present he would be unwilling. No doubt Suzaku is right not to suggest it.'

Not to be put off by this first refusal, Sachūben now gave so harrowing a picture of the effect such a reply would have upon the ex-Emperor's already precarious condition that Genji could not help smiling : 'I know that he is ill and she is his favourite child,' he said. 'But that surely does not give him the right to impose her willy-nilly on any one he pleases. Am I to have no say in the matter at all ? But for my part I do not see wherein lies his difficulty. Why not simply send her to the Palace ? She would have competitors, of course ; but the last arrival does not always do worst. His own mother's[2] career was a case in point. While my father was Crown Prince, and during the early

[1] One of Genji's retainers.

[2] Kōkiden.

part of his reign, Kōkiden carried all before her ; but later on she was completely superseded by Lady Fujitsubo. Lady Wistaria, Nyosan's mother, was a sister of Fujitsubo. I hear the child is exceedingly good-looking, rather in Fujitsubo's style, they say ; though of course to a far less remarkable degree. . . . Why should not the same thing happen again ? With birth and good looks both on her side it would be strange indeed if she did not make her way. . . .'

But even while giving this advice he felt a certain curiosity to see the child for himself.

Three days after Nyosan's Initiation the ex-Emperor received the tonsure. However commonplace, however uneventful a man's life has been, this final ceremony is always painful to witness. But here was one, who had formerly stood upon the highest pinnacle of glory, ready now to obliterate at a stroke all that remained to him of comeliness and youth. A murmur of horror ran through the ranks of his gentlemen and attendants as the priests began to set about their fatal work. Oborozuki was at his side, and unable to bear the sight of her woe, Suzaku said : ' I always thought the hardest thing would be parting with my children ; but they, fortunately, seem cheerful enough on their side—which is a great help to me. Whereas you, with your tearful faces . . .'

Though he was not fit to be out of bed, they had carried him to a chair, where despite great weakness and discomfort he remained till the Abbot of Hiyeizan, attended by three senior priests, had administered to him the rules of the Tendai Sect, arrayed him in the habit of their order and performed such other rites as mark a final severance from the world. During these proceedings even the officiating priests could not restrain their tears, and such a storm of sobbing broke out among the princesses, consorts and

miscellaneous gentlewomen who thronged the room, that Suzaku devoutly wished he were already safely installed in his mountain retreat. It now seemed unlikely, however, that he would ever be able to perform the journey. And if he had thus irrevocably deprived himself of the quiet monastic days with which he had always hoped to close his life, it was (as he now confessed to himself) solely his perpetual worrying about Nyosan's future that had kept him in the Capital till too late.

After the ceremony he received numerous visitors, including the reigning Emperor. As the result of all this excitement Suzaku rallied slightly, and hearing of this Genji went to pay his long promised visit. He was received quite informally and accommodated in the seat commonly used by Suzaku when in health, a few extra hangings and ornaments having been added to smarten it. For a moment it was a great shock to Genji to see the companion of his youth arrayed in this solemn and penitential garb. Controlling himself by an effort, he said at last : ' Ever since my father's death, which for the first time impressed me strongly with the shortness and futility of human existence, I have been making plans to compass what you have now successfully achieved. I wish I had your strength of mind. The sight of you in those robes makes me feel thoroughly disgusted with my own continual procrastination. If you, who have known what it is to be lord of all the land, can bring yourself to take this step, there is certainly no reason why a humble person like myself should shrink from it. But every time I think that the last obstacle has been removed, some fresh difficulty crops up. . . .' They talked much of old times, and finally Suzaku said : ' You have no need to apologize in my presence for your slowness in breaking with the world. I myself have delayed from day till day, until it looks as though the better part of my plan will never be

fulfilled. But though I doubt whether I shall ever reach my retreat among the Western Hills, I hope I may live long enough to get through a few quiet prayers here in my own house. What now bothers me is that I have not been nearly so strict in my observances as I might have been, though all the while my thoughts were certainly turned to holy things, for it was only in the hope of spending a few last years in a sacred place that I struggled on against all this illness and pain. . . .' Having mentioned several small matters concerning which Genji could be useful to him, Suzaku continued: 'You have heard no doubt that I am very much exercised in mind over the future of my daughters. There is one in particular I should feel profoundly thankful to leave in the charge of some responsible person who would really give proper attention to her. . . .'

'Surely he is not going to start that business all over again?' thought Genji in alarm. Yet in a way he was not sorry to return to the subject, for he had a certain secret curiosity concerning this little princess. 'I quite understand,' he said, 'that a girl of Nyosan's rank needs, far more than any one of ordinary birth, to be provided from the outset with a settled home. But failing this, she will surely come to very little harm with her brother the Crown Prince to keep an eye upon her. He is a young man of remarkable abilities, and the whole country looks up to him with confidence and respect. He would in any case consider it his duty to take so near a relative under his especial protection; and if you mention the matter to him in advance, still less will you have any need to worry about her future. Later on your son will of course succeed to the Throne, and if to provide for a woman's happiness were as easy as to make new laws, Nyosan would indeed be assured of perfect felicity. But I admit that in the last resort there is very little that even an Emperor can do for women, save to admit

them to his household, which in this case does not come into question. So if you want here and now to make a permanent provision for her whole future, you must arrange with some one to adopt her after your death, and either marry her himself or promise to effect her marriage with some one previously selected by you. Then you surely need not fear that any misgivings will disturb you in the life beyond the grave. . . .' 'What is the use of telling me this?' Suzaku asked. 'Naturally I have thought of it all long ago. But it is not so easy as you make out. It is a difficult matter even for a reigning Emperor to find suitable alliances for several daughters. And for me, who have not only long ago resigned the Throne, but am on the verge of retiring to a monastery (if indeed I do not die before I succeed in getting there), the whole business is so perplexing that I verily believe half my illness is due to worrying about it. . . . I cannot afford to let another day go by without getting this thing settled. . . . I know it is asking a great deal of you, but do, I beseech you, consent to taking this one daughter of mine under your protection. As to finding her a husband, I will leave that to you. I am sure your choice would be all that I could desire. Were Yūgiri still available, his is the name I should suggest. But unfortunately Tō no Chūjō has anticipated me. . . .'

'Yūgiri,' replied Genji, 'has a great deal of steady-going good sense, and I think he would have made her an excellent husband. But he has had very little experience, and I doubt whether in any case I could recommend him as sole protector to a girl in Nyosan's position. As regards myself, I think it is quite true that if she is left an orphan she would under my care suffer the smallest possible inconvenience from the change in her position. Well, if I have hesitated to say "yes," it is only because it is likely enough, after all, that I shall not long survive you.'

It was unbelievable. Genji had consented; and apparently in the most whole-hearted way, for it was henceforward assumed on both sides that he would in due course marry [1] Nyosan himself.

Murasaki had already heard some rumour of Suzaku's intention. Her first feeling was one of alarm. But then she reminded herself of all the groundless and unnecessary misery she had suffered on finding that Genji was still visiting Princess Asagao. So determined was she not to attach undue importance to the affair that on his return she refrained even from asking him whether the subject had been discussed. He meanwhile naturally assumed that she knew nothing about the matter, and was wondering what line she would take. If there were to be difficulties, they could only last for a very short time. Murasaki would soon realize that the presence of this girl in the house, even as his wife, would make no difference whatever to her own position. But he knew that promises and assurances on his side would be of no avail. Time alone would convince Murasaki that nothing could change his feelings towards her; meanwhile, it was possible that a rather troublesome period was ahead. It was now so long since the slightest difficulty or suspicion had arisen between them that the idea of saying anything likely to upset her or interfere even for a few moments with the habitual tenderness of the hours they spent alone together was extremely painful to him. That night at any rate, he thought, matters might be left as they were, and he made no reference to his conversation with Suzaku.

Next day the weather was wretched, and while storms of snow swept a sullen sky he sat with Murasaki, laying

[1] Since Aoi's death Genji had no wife, Murasaki being technically only a chief concubine, her mother's low rank making it impossible for her to be a *kita no kata* or 'legitimate consort.'

plans for the future, and recalling many episodes of their common past.

'I thought I had better go and see the ex-Emperor before it was too late,' said Genji at last. 'It was in many ways a painful meeting. He seems unable to think about anything but who is going to look after this daughter of his, little Princess Nyosan. He at once attacked me on the subject, and considering the pitiable state he was now in, I felt it was impossible to refuse. . . . I know that tiresome stories will be put about, I cannot help that. . . . As a matter of fact he made a similar proposal to me some time ago, but indirectly, through a servant of mine. On that occasion I refused unhesitatingly, for I did not at all like the idea of taking on fresh responsibilities at my age. But when, during my visit, he returned (as I had thought it impossible he should do) to the same subject, and besought me passionately not to persist in my refusal, I could not help feeling that it would be inhuman to hold out. . . . She will not in any case come here until Suzaku moves into his mountain retreat. I can quite understand that you would rather I had not consented. But please believe me that, at the worst, nothing can happen which will make the slightest difference to you. Try to enter into Suzaku's feelings. I am sure that if you do so, you will be glad that I am helping him in this way. With a little tact and forbearance on both sides, I do not see why there should be any great difficulty. . . .'

He had only to tease her a little—pretend jokingly to admire some quite absurd and impossible individual, and instantly Murasaki would fall into a panic, certain that here was the beginning of a final disastrous episode. Yet now, for some reason, she felt that at all costs he must not see what was passing through her mind, and she answered quietly: 'Poor Suzaku! I do not see how under such cir-

cumstances you could possibly have refused. Nor should I dream of raising any objection on my own account. Indeed, I shall be very unhappy if I do not quickly succeed in convincing her that, as far as I am concerned, she is doubly welcome here. For not only am I touched by her father's plight, but I also recollect a fact of which she no doubt is fully aware, though you have not mentioned it: her mother, Lady Wistaria, was my father's sister. I should be thought churlish indeed if I did not make a cousin feel at home in my house. . . .'

He knew her too well not to guess that, behind this tone of complete reasonableness and accord, there might easily be hidden quite other thoughts and feelings. But if this did indeed, quite contrary to what he had expected, turn out to be her real attitude, if she managed both to make the little princess feel at her ease, and at the same time to be happy herself, then he would have more reason than ever to prize her as the greatest treasure that life had yielded to him. 'There are sure to be all sorts of absurd rumours . . .' he said. 'Do not pay any attention to them. Remember that, as regards matters of this kind, the most circumstantial accounts frequently lack the slightest foundation in fact. It is best to observe for oneself, and not let outside stories affect one's judgment. So whatever you may hear, wait till your own experience confirms it before you decide that I am not treating you as I should. . . .'

After all, she thought to herself afterwards, the care of this girl was a duty that he could not possibly have avoided. It had fallen upon him as it were from the sky, and to be cross with him for accepting it would be ridiculous. If Nyosan had been some girl that he had taken a fancy to or gone out of his way to befriend, the case would have been different. But it was perfectly true that this step had been

imposed upon him ; and Murasaki was determined to show the world that she was not going to lose her head. But she knew that once people take a dislike to one, it does not make much difference how one behaves. . . . For example, her stepmother had even held her responsible for Makibashira's fall ; it was Murasaki's jealousy (so this woman asserted) that had forced Genji to plant Tamakatsura in Higekuro's way ! No doubt her tortuous imagination would not fail to supply equally complicated slanders in the present case. For though generous and long-suffering, Murasaki was capable of making judgments that were by no means devoid of sharpness. And now, though as yet all was well, there came back to her again and again the thought that perhaps the dreaded turning-point had come. His confidence, his devotion, the whole sovereignty in his affections that had been so long her pride, would begin to slip away from her. . . .

But during all this time there was nothing in her behaviour which could have suggested to her companions that any such fears were passing through her mind.

So the year drew to a close. Suzaku was still lying bedridden in the Capital, but he had now made up his mind that Nyosan was to move into the New Palace at once. Not only were the various aspirants to her hand much put out at hearing that Genji was to take possession of her, but the Emperor himself, who had counted on being given a chance of adding her to his establishment, was distinctly disappointed. However, he did not think it worth while disputing the matter, and decided to let things take their course. This year, as has already been said, Genji was to celebrate his fortieth birthday, and resolutions were passed by the Government concerning the festivities that were to mark this event. The prospect was a formidable one for Genji, who had always disliked pompous anniversaries and

commemorations. The whole country seemed bent upon devising elaborate and costly methods of disturbing his peace, all of which he discouraged firmly.

But there was one small attention which he had no chance of forestalling. On the third day of the first month, being a day of the Rat, Tamakatsura determined to take upon herself the customary presentation of spring shoots.[1] She allowed no breath of this intention to leak out beforehand ; but as wife of a State Minister she could not appear without a considerable escort, and her arrival at Genji's palace made far more of a stir than she desired.

Genji's seat was in the side-room opening out of the great Front Hall. His dais was surrounded by newly-painted screens, and there were fresh white canvas hangings round the walls ; but the special stools, tables and stands used in the formal celebration of a fortieth birthday had all been dispensed with. The forty little mats laid out around him, his cushions and seat—indeed all the details of his installation were very daintily chosen. The four boxes containing the customary presents of clothing were displayed upon two stands of mother-of-pearl inlaid with enamel. These clothes (complete outfits for both winter and summer), together with the incense jars, medicine boxes, inkstand, hairwashing appliances, comb boxes and such things were all of the finest. The mirror-stand was of cedar-wood, and the mirror itself, though no other substance was inlaid in the metal nor was any sort of colouring applied to it, was grained on the back with a delicate leaf-pattern. All these arrangements had been devised by Tamakatsura herself, who had a particular gift for the happy ordering of such small elegancies. The whole affair was very quiet and informal. Tamakatsura had audience with him before he took his place on the birthday throne. It was a long

[1] A Chinese custom, imitated by the Japanese Court.

while since they had met, and, in the mind of each, recollections of a curious, possibly even of an embarrassing kind must have arisen. He seemed to her very young to be celebrating such an anniversary, and looking at him she found herself wondering for a moment whether there had not been some mistake! Could this be the head of a household, the founder of a family? It was very difficult after all these months of separation to know what tone to take up or even what to talk about. But soon she found herself carrying on very much the same sort of conversation as in the old days. She had brought with her her two little boys.[1] Genji had often asked to see them, but hitherto she had refused, and on this occasion it was only in obedience to her husband's absolute command that she had brought them to the New Palace. They were handsome little fellows, both dressed exactly alike in miniature Court cloaks and breeches, with their hair parted in the middle and done up in a loop on either side. Speaking of growing old, he said to her: 'Please do not think that I do it on purpose. I should have been perfectly content to remain just as I was; and indeed I could keep up the pretence fairly well, did not such creatures as these, whom I now see springing up on every side, convict me of being, in age at any rate, a grandfather. Perhaps indeed I really am one; for I hear very little of Yūgiri nowadays, and am not at all sure he would think it worth while to tell me. However, I had quite made up my mind to go on being young for a little while longer, when you of all people come to warn me that I have overstepped the fatal mark. . . .'

She too had outwardly suffered very little from the passage of the years, though she seemed less diffident and retiring.

At the Presentation of the Spring Shoots, which followed

[1] They must have been about four and three years old.

a few minutes later, she recited with great dignity and composure the congratulatory poem :

' With these new shoots fetched from the green hillside, young pine-boughs have I brought to crown your fortunes with eternal Spring.' The young shoots were presented for his inspection on four trays of sandal-wood. Taking the great wine flagon in his hand, he recited the answer : ' Though loth to pile the years about my head, not lightly shall I quit the field where Spring by Spring these pines spread wider shade.'

A number of visitors were assembled in the southern side-room. Prince Hyōbukyō had made up his mind to stay away ; but his absence being noted, a special messenger was sent to summon him. Being nearly related to so many of those who were concerned in to-day's ceremony, he could not, without marked discourtesy, have persisted in his refusal, and towards noon he at last arrived. The spectacle of his son-in-law Higekuro flaunting his new bride in the face of the company was more than he could have been expected to bear with equanimity. But Makibashira's two children were there, and for their sakes he did his best to be friendly, taking a hand, whenever he was wanted, in the small arrangements of the ensuing ceremony. The presents, in forty baskets and forty boxes, were offered by a band of noblemen and courtiers, led by Yūgiri. The great flagon went round, and Genji tasted the broth that had been brewed with Tamakatsura's offering. The August Cup and other utensils were daintily laid out on four low tables of sandal-wood. The ex-Emperor was still thought to be in danger, and consequently no professional musicians were employed. But the flute-music was in charge of Tō no Chūjō, who was determined that an occasion of such importance should not be marred by lack of music, and had drawn up an excellent programme. As for other instru-

ments, he saw to it that the rarest and oldest of every kind should be produced, setting the example himself by bringing out a Japanese zithern that had for centuries been one of the most treasured possessions in his family. He, the greatest performer of the time, played on it himself, with delightful but somewhat embarrassing effect. For every one else suddenly became shy, and when Genji asked Kashiwagi to play something, the young man for a long while refused. But at last he overcame his reluctance, which was a good thing, for his performance was by no means inferior to that of his father. Every one was both pleased and surprised; for such talent is very rarely inherited. And here must be noted a point that is often overlooked: it is far easier to learn ancient Chinese tunes, though every note has to be played exactly as it is handed down, than to improvise upon the Japanese zithern, where one has complete freedom, save for the necessity of giving scope to the accompanying players. It was just in this way that Kashiwagi excelled. He was now playing in concert with a full orchestra; but managed in the most astonishing way to keep in touch with all the other instruments.

Tō no Chūjō had, in his solo, played with his zithern tuned very low, so that the strings vibrated with a dull, rumbling sound. But Kashiwagi's was tuned to the ordinary high pitch, and this (by contrast) gave to his playing a quality of lightness and gaiety. Never had the company heard him in such good form.

About the middle of the second month Nyosan moved into the New Palace. Great preparations were made for her reception; the room where the Presentation of Young Shoots had taken place was set apart for her own use, while several rooms in the neighbouring wing and galleries were made ready for her attendants, after a great sweeping and scrubbing. She brought her own furniture with her, just

as is done by a new arrival at the Emperor's Palace. Her coming took on the aspect of a great public ceremony, being attended by the whole Court. Genji (though, his rank being equal to that of a retired Emperor, he was under no obligation to do so) went out to assist her in alighting from her coach.

The exchange of compliments [1] on the third day was carried out in the most formal manner. Murasaki had naturally not been slow to realize—what Genji had not hitherto definitely disclosed—that Nyosan had come as a bride. The discovery came as a cruel blow, yet even so there was no reason to suppose that the new-comer was likely in any sense to take Murasaki's place. After all, this was not the first time that she had been called upon to suffer the presence of a rival in the house. But hitherto these rivals had been without exception her inferiors in birth, and not much less than her equals in age; whereas Nyosan was a person of quite as much social consequence as herself, and, into the bargain, was just entering upon that season of sunshine and flowers to which Murasaki was already bidding farewell.

But she did not show, or hoped she did not show, any of these feelings, and in the preparations for Nyosan's arrival she gave Genji all the help she could. While side by side they were devising plans for these new household arrangements, she seemed to enter with the greatest interest into every detail; and looking at her fondly, Genji wondered whether any other woman in the world would have done the same. The little princess, though now well on in her thirteenth year, was very small for her age, and indeed still looked a mere child. Her conversation and behaviour

[1] On the third day after the arrival of a bride the husband notified the bride's father that the marriage had been consummated and was likely to prove a success.

also savoured solely of the nursery, and Genji could not help remembering how lively, how full of character and imagination little Murasaki had been when twenty years ago he had carried her to his home. But perhaps it was a good thing that the new-comer was, except in actual years, so very much of a child. She would certainly be less likely to get into scrapes. But unfortunately, Genji reflected, people who do not get into scrapes are a great deal less interesting than those who do.

During the first three nights Murasaki saw nothing of him, and though this was quite natural under the circumstances, she felt it deeply; for it was now several years since they had thus been separated. Each evening she perfumed his clothes with more than ordinary care. Never had she seemed to him more complete, more all-sufficing than at these moments; and watching her grave, eager face as she bent over the work, he wondered that a dying man's pleadings and lamentations should have sufficed to lead him into such a course. But stay! Did not his own restlessness, his own insatiable curiosity have something to do with this rash consent? There was Yūgiri. Young though he was, it had been justly assumed that it was not worth while even approaching him with the proposal to which Genji had so readily consented. 'Just once more,' he said on the third night. 'After this I shall not have to desert you again; or, if I ever do so, you may be certain it will not be at my own desire. I must not give Suzaku the impression . . .'

His predicament seemed to her a strange and rather absurd one. 'If it is Suzaku and not yourself whom you are trying to please,' she said, smiling, 'I am sure you can judge better than I can what will suffice to keep him happy.'

In the end it was at Murasaki's persuasion that, far later than he had intended, he made his way to Nyosan's room.

But it was with aching heart that she watched him cross the threshold, clad in the soft, fine cloak that she had scented with her own hands.

If all this had happened a few years ago, at the time when she lived constantly on the watch for the first signs of some such trouble, she would have been better able to meet it. But lately she had grown used to life running in an even tenour that seemed incapable of change, and even if it had been a mere matter of rumour or suspicion, her sense of security would have received a rude shock. As it was, she knew that henceforward, come what might, she would not have many easy moments ; but of this she did not breathe a word to any one. Not so her gentlewomen, among whom there was to-night a great deal of indignant nudging and whispering : ' Who would have thought we should ever live to see such a day ! ' ' Well, this isn't the first time he's taken a fancy to some one. . . .' ' Of course not ; but none of the others was anything to worry about, so far as I ever heard. I don't mean that even now there is any real danger. But small difficulties are bound to crop up now and again. It is not going to be any too pleasant a time for most of us. . . .' Murasaki affected to be unconscious of these dialogues, and sat talking, spiritedly enough, till a late hour in the night. Anxious that her women should have no excuse for spreading in the world at large the impression that she was taking up a hostile line towards Nyosan, she said at last : ' I am so glad that this young princess has come to live with us. For though we are already so large a household, His Highness badly needs new society. I think he will get on very well with her, and she will make a fresh interest in his life. I too shall be delighted to have her here, for since the Akashi Princess went away there has been no one for me to play games with, and oddly enough I still enjoy them just as much as when I was a child. It is

too bad that people are saying I am opposed to her living here. Nothing could be further from the truth. Perhaps if His Highness were to take some one of my own rank, or some one whom I regarded as very inferior, too much into his confidence, I might for a time feel a little bit jealous. But as it is, I am glad that he should have found any way of assisting this unfortunate creature. . . .'

With such sentiments as these it was hard for Nakatsukasa and Chūjō no Kimi to keep patience, and they exchanged glances which clearly meant : ' Sympathy can be carried too far ! ' Formerly they had both been in Genji's personal service ; but for a long while past they had waited upon Murasaki, and were both devotedly attached to her.

Meanwhile speculation was rife among the other ladies of the household as to how this new development would affect Murasaki's position ; and for the first time they felt a certain satisfaction in their own poor estate, which, humdrum though it was, could never land them in one of these humiliating predicaments. . . . To each of them separately it occurred that it would be kind to call upon Murasaki, and they arrived in rapid succession, thus bringing home to her in the most painful fashion the fact that she had become an object of sympathy.

Again and again Murasaki told herself that life was very short. Soon this and all else would be over ; what sense could there be in minding things so much ? But when night came she felt she could not rest, and it was only to avoid the comments of those about her that at last she crept under the bedclothes. And though such nights as the one I am describing had become common enough since Nyosan's arrival, Murasaki still felt awkward and lopsided as she tried to arrange herself in bed. This reminded her of the days when he was at Suma. She found herself, strangely enough, wishing that he were now equally far

away. Simply to know that he was alive—that was all she asked ; and she afflicted herself afresh by imagining him at the ends of the earth, while she remained alone in the Capital. To vary this, she imagined her own death, rapidly followed by his. Here she checked herself. A pretty pass things had come to when she had to conjure up such visions in order to allay the torment of reality !

A dismal wind was howling. She tried in vain to sleep, lying dead still, that the gentlewomen who were near her might think she was asleep despite the storm ; and she was lying thus when a dreary cock-crow seemed to tell that the night was past. But opening her eyes she saw that it was still dark.

She had not all this while thought of Genji with any rancour or hostility, but her distress was vivid enough to find a way into his dreams, and it was after a terrifying vision of her that he woke up with a start and hearing the cock crow told Nyosan he must be gone, for it had been agreed that he should leave at daybreak, and now, in his anxiety to discover whether Murasaki was in some special need of him, he affected not to notice that, despite the crowing of the cock, it was still black night. Nyosan was still so young that she liked to have her nurses sleeping close at hand, and when Genji opened the passage-door, they sat up and craned their necks after him. In the east a faint semblance of light was beginning to show, dimly reflected by the snow that lay on the path. The perfume of his dress lingered where he had passed, and one of the nurses whispered, ' Though black the night. . . .' [1]

The snow only remained in patches here and there, but the sand of the garden-paths was very white, and often he was in doubt whether he was going to tread on sand or

[1] ' Though black this night of spring, what guide need we save the scent of their blossoms to guide us whither the plum-trees bloom ? '

snow. While he knocked at the outer door of Murasaki's room, he murmured to himself those lines of Po Chū-i:

In broken places of the Castle wall snow is still left;
Down streets unwoken by the morning drum no foot has yet stirred.

It was a long time before there was any answer to his summons, for her people were quite unused to answering the door at such an hour, and when at last they undid the bolts, he grumbled: 'You have kept me standing here till I am half frozen. A poor reward for hurrying home so early! I wish now that I had not bestirred myself. . . .'

He came to Murasaki's bedside and pulled back the coverlet. As he did so, with a quick movement she hid the sleeve of her dress, that was still wet with the tears she had shed during the night. He began treating her as though nothing were amiss, speaking with the utmost tenderness and affection. But coax and pet as he might, she remained serious and preoccupied, turning from him sorrowfully as though she felt he had no right to have come. He sat watching her, full of admiration and delight. Certainly it was not in search of beauty that he had need to go abroad at night! He spent all day with her, recalling a thousand tender passages in their past life together, begging her not to shut her thoughts away from him. When night came he sent a note to Nyosan's quarters saying that the snowy weather had upset him and that it was thought best he should remain where he was. The nurse, who took his message, knew very well what to make of it, and came back in a minute or two, saying curtly: 'I have told my Lady.' Evidently Nyosan's people were not best pleased with the excuse. What if they should carry their complaint to the ex-Emperor? This was only the fourth night after the marriage. Perhaps after all it was rather soon to begin suspending his nightly visits; he had better invent some

fresh excuse and go to Nyosan at any rate this one time more. But a moment later, looking at Murasaki, he wondered how it could ever have occurred to him as possible to leave her. Meanwhile she on her side felt that he had treated Nyosan almost contemptuously, and wished that he would take the trouble to manage things a little better. . . .

Next morning he sent a note of apology to Nyosan's apartments, and though it was not to be supposed that at her age she was very critical in such matters, he trimmed his brush with the utmost care and wrote on exquisitely white paper : ' No deep drift bars my path, but with their whirling these thin, parched snowflakes have bewitched my dizzy brain.' This he tied to a sprig of plum-blossom, and sending for one of his servants, bade him take it not across the garden,[1] but by way of the western gallery. The answer was long in coming, and tired of waiting he went back to Murasaki in the inner room. He was still carrying in his hand the rest of the plum-branch from which he had detached the spray, and conscious that Murasaki was looking at it curiously, he said : ' How pleasant it would be if all flowers had so delightful a scent as this ! However, it is a good thing for the other flowers that the cherry-blossom cannot borrow this smell. The rest would seem to us mere weeds, and we should never give them another thought again. The plum-flower, however, has this advantage over the others, that it comes first. Our eyes have not yet been sated with blossom, and we accord to this earliest comer what is perhaps an undue attention. Then, wisely, it vanishes, before the cherry has reached its prime. . . .'

At this moment (when he had almost given up expecting it) Nyosan's answer at last arrived. It was on thin crimson paper, and the extreme ingenuity and daintiness with which it was folded made his heart beat fast as he opened it.

[1] That Murasaki might not see.

Alas, her writing was still quite unformed, and he wished that it had been possible to prevent Murasaki from seeing it some while longer. Not that the letter contained anything in the slightest degree intimate. But considering the writer's rank and what would naturally be expected of her, it seemed a shame to show so childish a production. But to conceal it from Murasaki would be sure to lead to misunderstandings, so he let her read what she could see of it over his shoulder as she lay beside him. The poem ran: 'So light the last spring snow that, should the least waft of unkindness come, those thin flakes soon would vanish down the windy cross-roads of the sky.'

It was indeed a childish, scrawling hand, far behind what one would have expected in a girl of Nyosan's years; but Genji merely glanced at it and put the letter away. If it had come from any one else he would certainly have discussed this strangely backward letter with Murasaki and attempted to account for its inefficiency. As it was, he merely said with a sigh: 'Well, well! That at any rate must prove to you that you have small ground for anxiety.'

During the day he paid a short visit to Nyosan's rooms. He had taken more trouble than ever with his costume, wishing her to feel that his failure to appear last night was not due to carelessness or disrespect. Her younger gentlewomen were easily mollified by the magnificence of his get-up; but the head nurses regarded last night's non-appearance as a very grave omen. 'Come, come,' they said. 'It's no use his trying to mend matters by wearing his smartest clothes.' The little princess was certainly very pretty; but all her surroundings were so exquisitely appointed and she herself so marvellously dressed, that looking at her one began to wonder whether, apart from her clothes and grand belongings, she had any existence at all. It could not be said that she was particularly shy; but her friendliness

and composure were those of a child that barely distinguishes between friends and strangers, rather than of a young lady to whom experience has taught the art of self-possession. Her father Suzaku, though always somewhat effeminate and over-sensitive, or at any rate constantly criticized on this score by his subjects, was assuredly not lacking in feeling for the elegancies of life, and to Genji it was incomprehensible that he should have allowed his favourite child to grow up backward in just those accomplishments to which he himself had always paid the greatest attention. Genji was upset, for the girl's deficiencies were such as must inevitably make her an uninteresting associate for some while to come. However, he did not take an actual dislike to her, and soon began attempting to draw her into conversation. She agreed with everything he said, but did not succeed in introducing any fresh topic of her own, and not so many years ago he would have set her down as a hopeless simpleton. But recently he had grown much more tolerant. If one was going to dismiss people because of a single shortcoming, there would soon be no one left. He had made up his mind henceforward to get as much pleasure as possible out of what was interesting in the people he met and forget about their bad points. To be bored by this girl, for whose hand in marriage the whole Court would in a short while have been scrambling, was really too perverse. Yet far more than at any time before Nyosan's arrival he now felt how unique Murasaki was. Surely his adoption of her was the one step in his life that he would never have cause to regret. Such time as he spent with Nyosan (whether by day or night) he found himself grudging more and more, till he was frightened at his own increasing inability to live more than an hour or two on end in any but Murasaki's company.

The Crown Prince had taken an immense fancy to his little bride from Akashi, and never allowed her out of his

sight. One day she announced that she was tired of Court and had decided to go home for a while to Genji's palace. But the Crown Prince would not hear of it. She was obliged to give way ; not however without considerable resentment, for this was the first time in her life that she had ever failed to get her way. In the summer she was not very well, and it was agreed in principle that she should be allowed a short leave of absence. But day after day her departure was deferred, and she began to feel as though her marriage had sentenced her to perpetual captivity. Presently it became clear that there was a special reason for her indisposition. Her attendants would indeed have reached this conclusion sooner had she not been so very young [1] ; but as soon as it was apparent that she needed rest and care, leave of absence was granted, and she moved into the New Palace. Her old rooms were no longer available, and she was put into a suite that opened out of Princess Nyosan's quarters, her mother of course accompanying her. This was the first time that the Lady of Akashi had inhabited the New Palace without being separated from her child, and her delight knew no bounds.

One day when Murasaki and Genji were about to visit the Crown Princess's rooms, Murasaki said to him : 'Would not this be a good opportunity for me to make Nyosan's acquaintance ? That dividing-door could so easily be opened. . . . I have for some time past been meaning to visit her, but it has always been very difficult to arrange. This seems the best chance that is likely to turn up. . . .' 'Certainly, nothing could be easier,' replied Genji, 'you have only to walk in. It is impossible to treat her otherwise than as a child. So far from standing on ceremony with her, I hope you will help me to correct her faults It is the kindest thing you can do. . . .' He

[1] Barely fourteen.

went to Nyosan, and in the course of conversation said to her: 'Later on this evening Lady Murasaki will be visiting your neighbour, the Crown Princess. It is an excellent opportunity for you to make her acquaintance, and I hope you will allow her to come straight through into these rooms. Murasaki is a delightful person, and she is just as fond of games as you are. I believe you would have great fun together.' Nyosan looked rather scared. 'I should not know what to say to her. . . .' she answered helplessly. 'Oh, that would be all right,' he hastened to assure her. 'She would talk, and you are quite good at finding things to say if some one helps you out by leading the way. In any case, make friends with her. That is all I ask.'

So anxious was he for them to get on well together that he had for some time past been positively dreading the inevitable encounter, and had done nothing on his side to promote it. For he feared that Murasaki would, when it came to the point, find Nyosan's childish ways merely tiresome and her insipid conversation exasperating. However, this time it was Murasaki herself who had suggested the meeting, and there could be no sense in opposing it.

Meanwhile Murasaki went to her room to get ready for the visit. Even while she did so she assured herself that, despite all the care she was taking in her preparations and the feeling (dictated by all the circumstances of the visit) that she was about to pay her court to a reigning power, Nyosan was neither her superior in this household, nor to any considerable extent in the world at large. While waiting for Genji to fetch her, she began doing a little writing-practice, not composing the poems, but writing old ones that she knew by heart. She was not feeling depressed, but only the most desolate and love-lorn verses came into her head, and by an odd accident each seemed in some special way to fit her own case.

Coming from the presence of younger women, such as Nyosan, Genji always expected that Murasaki would appear to him inevitably (and he was willing to make allowance for it) a little bit jaded, a trifle seared and worn. Moreover, he had lived with her so long, knew her, as he supposed, so well by heart that, even had not age touched her charms, it would scarcely have been strange if they no longer had power to excite him. But as a matter of fact it was just these younger women who failed to provide any element of surprise, whereas Murasaki was continually astounding him ; as indeed she did to-night, dressed in all the splendour that the coming visit demanded, her clothes scented with the subtlest and most delicious perfumes, her whole person ever more radiant this year than last year, to-day than yesterday.

Seeing him enter, she hid the papers on which she had been writing under the inkstand ; but he rescued them before she could protest. Hers was not a hand of the sort that occurs once in a generation, and is remembered for ever afterwards. But there was great beauty in it, and scanning the papers he found the verse : ' Is autumn [1] near to me as to those leafy hills, that even while I watch them grow less green ? ' Taking her brush he wrote beside her poem : ' Look to the moat ! Sooner shall yon bird's emerald wings grow white, than autumn bind its frosts about my Love.'

Again and again, from small indications that she gave him unintentionally and unawares, he saw that she was very unhappy. If he made no allusion to this, it was not either that he failed to observe it, or that he did not know what struggles she made to conceal her pain.

With Murasaki the Crown Princess was quite as much at

[1] *Aki* means ' autumn,' but also ' to be tired of,' and there is the secondary meaning : ' Is the day when Genji will grow tired of me near at hand ? '

home as with her own mother, and this part of the visit naturally passed off agreeably enough. The girl had grown very good-looking, and Murasaki, to whom her existence had once been a reminder of unpleasant things, no longer felt in her society anything but the most unfeigned pleasure. After a short conversation she proceeded through the dividing door into Nyosan's apartments. The little princess's childish lack of conventional small-talk proved to be the reverse of embarrassing, for it enabled Murasaki from the start to treat her as a young relative who had been put into her care. It was necessary first of all to explain the rather complicated chapter of family history which made them cousins. Sending for Nyosan's head nurse, she said: 'We have been working things out, and it certainly seems beyond doubt that your mistress and I are connected by family ties in many directions. I hope you do not think it rude of me to have been so long in coming. It seemed so difficult to arrange. But your mistress and I have now made great friends, and I hope you will not only allow me to visit you again, but also bring her to my rooms. Please consider henceforward that, if we do not frequently come together, the fault will lie on your side.' 'Well, madam,' replied the nurse, 'what with her mother dead and her father shut away in a monastery, I am sure my little lady would have a sad time of it, were it not for kindness such as yours. But I know quite well that her father would never have brought himself to leave the City if he had not been certain that you would welcome us as you have done to-day, and make it your business to watch over our young lady with a friendly eye. For, madam, as you see, she is very young in her ways, and not only needs your help, but is used to being guided by those about her, and fully expects you to take her under your wing.' 'The ex-Emperor's appeal was couched in such terms,' answered

Murasaki, 'that Prince Genji could never have dreamed of rejecting it; and I for my part was only sorry that it lay in my power to do so little for this poor child's happiness.' Then turning abruptly from this serious conversation, to which Nyosan had herself paid very little attention, Murasaki began talking about picture-books and dolls with such knowledge and enthusiasm, that Nyosan at once decided she was not so dull as most grown-up people, nor indeed like one at all. Henceforward they met very often, or when that was impossible, exchanged little notes concerned exclusively with the behaviour of Nyosan's dolls and the fortunes or reverses of her other toys.

At the first news of Nyosan's removal to the New Palace, people had hastened to make the obvious prediction that Murasaki's day would soon be over. When, however, as time passed, it became abundantly clear that Genji, so far from being exclusively interested in the new arrival, was treating Murasaki with an even greater consideration than before, they waxed indignant on Nyosan's behalf, and said that if Murasaki had him so completely in her power he ought never to have taken the little princess into his house. Now came the news (disconcerting to gossip of either kind) that perfect harmony prevailed between the two ladies, and to these outside observers the situation lost all further interest.

The Crown Princess was now nearing her time. From the beginning of the next year a service of continual intercession was kept up in Genji's palace, and in every Buddhist temple or shrine of the old faith throughout the land prayers were said on her behalf. A previous experience [1] had made Genji particularly nervous about such events, and though it was a grief to him that Murasaki had never borne a child, he was in a way relieved that he had never been called upon to

[1] Aoi's death in childbirth.

endure the agonies of suspense that such an event would have inflicted upon him. The Princess's extreme youth was another source of anxiety, and when at the beginning of Kisaragi [1] her strength showed signs of failing, not only Genji but all those in charge of her began to take serious alarm. After careful investigation, the magicians decided that the situation of her present room was unfavourable, and insisted upon a change. To move her away from the palace altogether would clearly be a very risky undertaking, and she was carried to the Central Hall of her mother's former apartments in the northern wing. These had the advantage of being surrounded on every side by passages and covered galleries in which it was possible to accommodate the huge band of priests (with their altars and other gear) that had now assembled in the palace. For every healer of any repute in the country had been summoned to work his spells.

The Lady of Akashi, quite apart from the anxiety that she must in any case feel at such a time, was in a state of the utmost suspense ; for the safe delivery of an heir would mean that all her sacrifices had not been made in vain. On this occasion her mother, now a very old lady indeed, had come up from the country, unable to bear the anxiety of being at a distance from all news.

The Crown Princess knew very little about the circumstances of her birth ; but once admitted to her bedside, the old grandmother was soon pouring out a tremulous flood of anecdotes and lamentations that, confused though it was, for the first time did something towards enlightening her. The girl had at first stared at this extraordinary visitor, wondering who on earth she could be ; but she was just aware of the fact that she possessed a grandmother, and when it became evident that this talkative old woman was

certainly she, the Princess tried to be as civil as she could. The visitor began describing Genji's life at Akashi, and the despair into which they had fallen at the time of his sudden recall. 'We never thought we should any of us set eyes on him again,' she said. 'Oh dear, oh dear! If only I could have known then that it was all going to work out for the best. . . . It was your coming into the world that saved us. I don't believe that but for you we should ever have heard a word from him after he went away.' And she burst into tears of gratitude and joy. The Princess also wept, partly because it always moves one to hear about one's childhood, partly because this revelation of the true facts about her birth had come to her as something of a shock. She had always known that her mother was not quite of the same class as the people with whom she now associated. But the careful education she had received at Murasaki's hands, combined with the admiring attitude of all her companions at Court, had destroyed in her the last trace of diffidence or timidity. She had long felt herself to be in every way on an equality with the greatest ladies in the land. With burning cheeks she recalled occasion upon occasion when she had spoken scornfully of persons who were (as she now realized) very far indeed from being her inferiors. The true facts about her origin were probably known to most people at Court, and though in her presence no sarcastic comment had ever been made, she could imagine the mirth that (behind the scenes) had always been provoked by her ignorant self-conceit. Akashi![1] Born at Akashi! What a hideous thought! That things were as bad as that she had never for a moment suspected; for it was her

[1] Not to be born in the City was regarded as a severe social disqualification, whoever the parents might be. In the narrative she is called the Princess from Akashi; but it must not be supposed that she was ever so addressed.

nature to turn away instinctively from enquiries that were likely to yield unpleasant information. Well, here indeed was a disagreeable and humiliating surprise. She wondered how she would ever be able to hold up her head again.

She was obliged next to listen to a long account of her grandfather's odd ways ; he had become, it seemed, a kind of rishi, living in the world but not of it. A queer place she came from and queer people she belonged to, thought the Princess, remembering the high line she had always taken on questions of birth and breeding. At this moment her mother entered, and noticed at once that she was looking very rueful indeed. In the passages outside there was a great stir, for the priests and magic-workers drawn from every quarter of the land were just assembling to recite the Rites of the Day. But actually in the Princess's room all was quiet, and availing herself of this opportunity the old nun had installed herself at the bedside and seemed to have taken complete possession of her grand-daughter and all that appertained to her.

' I wish she wouldn't do that,' thought the Lady of Akashi as she entered. ' She might at least put up a small screen. Any one seeing her planted at the bedside like that will wonder how on earth she got there. You would think she was the herb-doctor come to give the child a pill. How tiresome people do become at that age.' The old lady saw in a moment that she was thought to have taken too much upon herself. But she was getting very hard of hearing, and, as was usual when she was afraid she had missed some remark, she cocked her head on one side : ' Eh ? Eh ? ' ' Really, she's not so old as all that,' thought the Lady of Akashi. ' She can't be more than sixty-five, or at the most sixty-six.' The old lady looked very neat and respectable, even dignified, in her nun's robe ; but her appearance was

spoilt for the moment by the fact that her eyes were red and swollen with weeping. The Lady of Akashi knew only too well what this meant : her mother had been reminiscing, and turning to the Princess she said nervously : ' I can see that grandmother has been telling all sorts of extraordinary tales about the days of long ago. You must not believe everything she says ; for she is apt to mix up all sorts of fairy-stories, legends and marvels with things that really happened. I am sure she has been treating you to the oddest extracts from our family history.' Her suspicions were confirmed by the Princess's extreme quietness ; it was only too evident that the old nun had chattered with the greatest possible indiscretion. The Lady of Akashi had long ago decided that the moment of the Crown Prince's ascent to the Throne would be the right occasion for revealing to the Princess in their entirety the painful facts concerning her birth. As Empress she would have reached the utmost limit of a woman's ambition, and intelligence such as this, disagreeable though it might be, could not greatly depress her. But at the present moment it might have a very upsetting effect, and she regretted that her mother should have thought fit to take such a liberty.

The Rites of the Day were now over, and there was a great clatter as the priests left their work. To distract the Princess's thoughts her mother now brought her some fruit, coaxing her with : ' Could you not manage just one of these ?' and such-like motherly phrases. The old nun's delight in the presence of her lovely grandchild manifested itself in the most curious way. For whereas tears streamed from her eyes and her brows were contracted into what looked like the most disapproving frown, her lips were parted in a perpetual smile of delight, revealing a painfully toothless mouth. So truly alarming was the old lady's expression that she was positively afraid of the effect it might have

upon the invalid, and tried to catch her mother's eye, apparently without success.

Presently, however, the old nun recited the verse : ' Blame not the tears of love that like a running tide have stranded this old bark upon a profitable shore.' ' When I was young,' she added, ' people of the age I am now were privileged to weep as often as they felt inclined.'

' Following the pathway of that bark across the foam, I would retrace its course and find the felt-roofed hut whence it was launched upon the deep.' Thus the young Princess wrote upon the sheet of paper that was topmost in her writing-case ; and the Lady of Akashi : ' Though he that lingers on that shore long since of every worldly thought has cleared his breast, perchance of the heart's darkness [1] a little clings to him and clouds his nature still.'

There was then talk of the morning upon which they had parted with the old recluse. The Princess, who was at that time a mere infant, had not the haziest remembrance of this episode, but she could well believe that it had been very affecting.

About the middle of the third month she had an extremely painless and easy delivery, strangely at variance with what seemed to be portended by her previous weakness and distress. It was with intense relief that Genji heard of this event. The child was a boy ; so that everything had turned out in the happiest manner possible. Her present temporary quarters were inconveniently far from the front of the house, but it was pleasant for her to be so near her mother, and pleasant too for the old nun to watch the arrival of the presents which poured in from every side. She could indeed feel that the storm-tossed voyage of her life had cast her up at last upon ' a profitable shore,' as she herself had said.

[1] ' The heart's darkness,' *kokoro no yami*, is the love of parent for child.

But this arrangement could not continue, as it was too much at variance with traditional practice, and it was decided that the Princess must be moved back into her own apartments. Here she was visited by Murasaki, who found her sitting up in her white jacket, holding the little boy in her arms. It was a pretty sight ; but it was hard indeed for Murasaki to accustom herself to the idea that the little Princess from Akashi was a mother !

Not only was she herself without experience of this kind ; but it so happened that she had never before been brought into contact with such events, for this was the first child to be born in the house. Her delight in handling and attending to the child was so obvious that the Lady of Akashi had not the heart to deprive her of these offices, contenting herself with the bathing of the infant. She even consented to play this part on the official occasion when the Crown Prince's envoy came to administer the Bath of Recognition,[1] and the man, who had some general notion concerning the true state of affairs, thought how disagreeable it must be for the Princess to be continually reminded by her mother's shortcomings of this flaw in her lineage. But to his surprise he found during the performance of his duties that the Lady from Akashi had dignity and high breeding enough to be the mother of the grandest imaginable Princess.

Any further account of the birth-ceremonies would not be of special interest, and I shall therefore hurry on with my story. It was on the sixth night after the child's birth that the Princess moved back into her own quarters. On the seventh night the Emperor himself sent his presents. Suzaku's vows forbad that any gift from him should figure on such an occasion ; but it was generally understood that a magnificent largesse from the Public Treasury, brought by

[1] By sending this representative the Crown Prince acknowledged paternity of the child.

Tō no Ben and Senji, two officials of the Imperial Purse, was due to Suzaku's instigation. Presents of silk came in abundance, the Empress Akikonomu's offering exceeding that of the Emperor himself. The various princes and Ministers vied with one another in the magnificence of their gifts, and even Genji, who hated display and was apt to cut down all public demonstrations to the minimum, this time saw to it that everything should be carried through with the utmost splendour. Indeed the whole Court was in such a state of chatter and excitement that my head was in a whirl, and I forgot to make any note of the many beautiful and interesting ceremonies that took place in the Palace at the time of this little Prince's birth.

Genji, too, constantly took the child in his arms. 'Yūgiri,' he once said, 'has never invited me to make the acquaintance of his children, so that it is a great treat for me to be allowed to handle this pretty fellow. . . .'

The child was filling out fast. It was high time to find nurses for him, but Genji, rather than employ persons whom he did not know, spent some time searching round among those in his employ for ladies of good birth and intelligence with whose record he was thoroughly familiar. Through all this period the behaviour of the Lady of Akashi provoked universal admiration. She had shown dignity without touchiness, humility without disagreeable self-abasement. Hitherto Murasaki had always continued to feel a slight discomfort in her presence. But after the birth of the Prince they became much better friends. Though childless herself, she was extremely fond of children. She made the Guardian Dolls [1] and other toy figures with her own hands, and would sit for hours working their joints and making them do tricks.

During the third month there was a spell of delightful

[1] The original object of dolls is to divert evil influences from the child.

weather, and on one of these bright, still days Prince Sochi and Tō no Chūjō's son Kashiwagi called at the New Palace. 'I am afraid things are very quiet here,' Genji said to them. 'At this time of the year, when there are no public or private festivities of any kind, it is harder than ever to keep people amused. I wish I could think of some way to distract you. . . . Yūgiri was here just now. I cannot think what has become of him. I suppose we shall have to watch some more of this shooting on horseback; though I confess that for my part I am sick to death of it. I expect Yūgiri caught sight of some of the young men who always clamour for it, and that was why he vanished so soon.' 'I saw Yūgiri,' some one said. 'He is in the fields near the Race-course, playing football. There are a lot of them there. . . .' 'I am not myself very fond of watching football,' said Genji. 'It is a rough game. But I feel that to-day we all need something to wake us up . . .' and he sent a message to Yūgiri asking him to come round to the front of the house. The young man presently appeared accompanied by a band of courtiers. 'I hope you have not left your ball behind,' he said to them. 'How have you arranged the teams?' Yūgiri told him how they had been playing, and promised to find a fresh ground where the game could be seen from the windows of the house. The Crown Princess having now rejoined her husband, her apartments were vacant, and as there was a large stretch of ground not intersected by rivulets or in any other way obstructed, this seemed the best place to set up the posts. Tō no Chūjō's sons, both young and old, were all expert players. Neither the hour nor the weather could have been bettered, for it was the late afternoon, and there was not a breath of wind. Even Kōbai abandoned himself with such excitement to the game that Genji said: 'Look at our Privy Counsellor![1] He

[1] Kōbai was now a member of the Grand Council.

has quite forgotten all his dignities. Well, I see no harm in a man shouting and leaping about, whatever his rank may be, provided he is quite young. But I am afraid I have long passed the age when one can go through such violent contortions without becoming ridiculous. Look at that fellow's posture now. You must admit it would suit a man of my years very ill.'

Yūgiri soon induced Kashiwagi to join in the game, and as, against a background of flowering trees, these two sped hither and thither in the evening sunlight, the rough, noisy game suddenly took on an unwonted gentleness and grace. This, no doubt, was in part due to the character of the players ; but also to the influence of the scene about them. For all around were great clumps of flowering bushes and trees, every blossom now open to its full. Among the eager group gathered round the goal-post, itself tinged with the first faint promise of green, none was more intent upon victory than Kashiwagi, whose face showed clearly enough that there was a question of measuring his skill against that of opponents, even in a mere game ; it would be torment to him not to prove himself in a different class from all the other players. And indeed he had not been in the game for more than a few moments when it became apparent, from the way in which he gave even the most casual kick to the ball, that there was no one to compare with him. Not only was he an extremely handsome man, but he took great pains about his appearance and always moved with a certain rather cautious dignity and deliberation. It was therefore very entertaining to see him leaping this way and that, regardless of all decorum. The cherry-tree [1] was quite near the steps of the verandah from which Genji and Nyosan were watching the game, and it was strange to see how the

[1] The four goal-posts were a pine-tree, a maple, a willow and a cherry-tree, growing in tubs.

players, their eye on the ball, did not seem to give a thought to those lovely flowers even when they were standing right under them. By this time the costumes of the players were considerably disordered, and even the most dignified amongst them had a ribbon flying loose or a hat-string undone. Among these dishevelled figures a constant shower of blossom was falling. Yūgiri could at last no longer refrain from looking up. Just above him was a half-wilted bough. Pulling it down, he plucked a spray, and taking it with him, seated himself on the steps with his back to the house. Kashiwagi soon joined him, saying: 'We seem to have brought down most of the cherry-blossom. The poet [1] who begged the spring wind "not to come where orchards were in bloom" would have been shocked by our wantonness. . . .' He turned his head and looked behind him to where Nyosan and her ladies were dimly visible beyond their curtains.

Kashiwagi had been on intimate terms with the ex-Emperor Suzaku, and at the time when her future was still in question had corresponded occasionally with Nyosan. Suzaku was aware of this, and seemed on the whole to encourage it. Kashiwagi was therefore both surprised and disappointed when her marriage with Genji was announced. He had become very much interested in her, and through one of her gentlewomen with whom he happened to be acquainted he still heard a great deal about her. This, however, was but a poor consolation; and to make his chagrin the greater, he heard rumours that Nyosan was very inadequately appreciated at the New Palace, Lady Murasaki still retaining an undiminished hold over His Highness's affections. Kashiwagi might be her inferior in birth and thus unsuited to claim her as a wife; but at any rate she would not in his house have been subjected to the

[1] Fujiwara no Yoshikaze, 9th century.

humiliations that he supposed her now to be enduring. Tired of merely hearing news about her health and employments, he made friends with a certain Kojijū, the little daughter of Nyosan's nurse, and tried to persuade her to carry messages. One never knew what might not happen. After all, Genji was always talking of retiring to a monastery. Some day he might really do so, and then would come Kashiwagi's second chance. Meanwhile he continued to plot and scheme for a renewal of the acquaintance.

And now on the day of the football match he found himself not many steps away from her. As usual, her gentlewomen were not under very good control, and a patch of bright sleeve or skirt constantly obtruded, as some spectator, in her excitement, tugged back a corner of the curtains through which the ladies of the house were watching the game. And behind the curtains there showed all the time gay strips of colour, flashing like prayer-strips at the roadside on a sunny spring day. The Princess's screens-of-state were carelessly arranged; she was not in the least protected on the side from which she was most likely to be seen. Still less was she adequately prepared for such an accident as now occurred; for suddenly a large cat leapt between the curtains in pursuit of a very small and pretty Chinese kitten. Immediately there was a shuffling and scuffling behind the screens, figures could be seen darting to and fro, and there was a great rustling of skirts and sound of objects being moved. The big cat, it soon appeared, was a stranger in the house, and lest it should escape it had been provided with a leash, which was unfortunately a very long one, and had now got entangled in every object in the room. During its wild plunges (for it now made violent efforts to get free) the creature hopelessly disarrayed the already somewhat disorderly curtains, and so busy were those within disentangling themselves from the leash that no one

closed the gap. In the foreground was plainly visible a group of ladies in a state of wild excitement and commotion. A short way behind them was a little figure standing up, dressed in a long robe without mantle. It was a red plum-blossom gown, with many facings, that showed one overlapping another, in different tinges of the same colour, like the binding of a book. Her hair, shaking like a skein of loose thread, was prettily trimmed and thinned out at the ends, but still reached to within a few inches from the ground. The contrast between the numerous overlapping thicknesses of her dress and her own extreme slimness and smallness was very alluring, her movements were graceful, and her hair, above all when seen with her head in profile, was unusually fine. Kashiwagi, as he peered through the growing darkness, wished that the accident had happened somewhat earlier in the evening. At this moment the cat gave a frenzied scream, and Nyosan turned her head, revealing as she did so a singularly unconcerned and confident young face. Yūgiri feared that he would be held responsible for this indiscretion, and was on the point of going up to the window and protesting; but he felt that this would draw further attention to the incident, and contented himself with clearing his throat in a loud and significant manner. Nyosan immediately vanished amid the shadows, rather too rapidly to suit the taste of Yūgiri, who had a considerable curiosity about the girl, and would, had he dared, gladly have availed himself of this opportunity to look at her for a little while longer. But by now the cat had been extricated; the screens and curtains were restored to proper order, and there was no chance that the intriguing vision of a moment ago would be repeated. And if it was with a slight feeling of disappointment that Yūgiri saw his hint so rapidly obeyed, it may be imagined how loud Kashiwagi's heart had all this while been beating. From the

first moment of her appearance there had been no doubt which was she, for she was differently dressed from any of the ladies about her, they wearing Chinese cloaks, and she an under-robe without cape or mantle. He hid, or hoped that he hid, the excitement through which he was passing. But Yūgiri guessed easily enough what impression such an episode was likely to have made, and being still in a way identified with this house, he blushed for Nyosan's immodesty. The cat was now straying at large, and to distract his thoughts Kashiwagi called it to him. The creature jumped into his lap and began purring complacently. It had not long ago been in Nyosan's own arms ; of this he was sure, for its soft fur still exhaled a strong perfume of the royal scent that only she could wear. At this moment Genji arrived, and seeing Kashiwagi fondling the Princess's cat with an expression of dreamy tenderness, he said sharply to the young men on the steps : ' You had better not sit so close to the house. It is embarrassing for the people in the room behind. . . Won't you come in here ? ' and he led them through a neighbouring door. They were soon joined by Prince Sochi, and a lively conversation began. The football players now began to arrive, taking their seats on straw cushions lined up along the verandah, and refreshments were served, first and foremost the usual Camellia cakes,[1] then pears, oranges and other such fruits, the exhausted players stretching for them greedily as the tray came their way. Finally, the great wine-flagon went round, accompanied only by dried fish.

Kashiwagi took very little part in the conversation and gazed all the while straight in front of him, apparently at the flowering trees in the garden. But Yūgiri knew well enough what vision it was that floated before his friend's eyes. The whole episode was very unfortunate. It must

[1] Always served to footballers.

certainly have given Kashiwagi the impression that the Princess was extremely loose in her ways. He could not imagine Murasaki allowing herself to be exposed like this, and the fact that such things could happen showed plainly how right the world was in declaring Genji to be reprehensibly inattentive to his new wife. Of course the Princess's lack of precaution was not due to shamelessness, but rather to the unsuspecting and serene self-confidence of extreme youth. All this no doubt was very attractive; but if he were in Genji's place he should find it also somewhat perturbing.

Kashiwagi for his part was not occupied in censoring either Nyosan or her attendants for the carelessness to which he owed his vision of her. Rather he regarded the affair as a happy accident—an omen, if one liked to consider it so, that his attachment was destined to ripen into something less shadowy than had hitherto seemed probable.

Genji began talking to Kashiwagi of his early rivalries with Tō no Chūjō: 'At football,' he said, 'your father was always far ahead of me. I do not suppose that you have actually learnt your skill from him, for such things cannot be taught; but no doubt you inherit an aptitude for the game. This evening you certainly gave us a masterly display. . . .' Kashiwagi laughed. 'I am afraid,' he said, 'that of all my father's talents this is the only one I have inherited. I am sorry for my descendants; apart from this one trifling gift, they will have nothing to inherit at all.' 'Never mind,' said Genji, 'so long as there is something at which you are better than other people, you deserve a place in history. You shall figure in your family records as a footballer; that would be rather amusing. . . .'

While they talked and laughed the conviction was borne in upon Kashiwagi that no one in the world could possibly

turn from Genji to him. Nyosan might like him, but there was no conceivable way in which she would not be the loser by such an exchange. His hopes, so high a moment before, suddenly sank to nothingness. She who had been so near in a moment became in his thoughts utterly inaccessible and remote, and he left the New Palace in the depths of despair.

He drove away in the same carriage as Yūgiri, and said to him presently: 'One ought really to visit Genji more often; particularly at this time of year, when there is so little to do. He said he hoped we should come again before the blossom was all gone. It is getting very near the end of Spring now. Do meet me here one day this month, and bring your bow. . . .' A day was fixed upon, but this was not what was really in his mind. He was trying to find some way of introducing Nyosan's name into the conversation, and presently he said: 'Genji does not seem to worry much about any one except Lady Murasaki. I wonder how the young Princess feels about it. She is used to being made such a fuss of by her father that I cannot help thinking she must find her new life rather wretched.' 'You are entirely wrong,' Yūgiri replied. 'My father's relations with Murasaki are of a kind it is difficult for outside people to understand. He adopted her when she was still a child, and there is naturally a great intimacy between them. He would not for the world do anything to hurt her feelings; but if you suppose this means he does not care for Nyosan, you are very much mistaken.' Yūgiri had raised his voice. 'Don't talk so loud,' Kashiwagi rebuked him, 'the grooms can hear every word you say. For my part I am certain that she is often very unhappy, and I do not think any one has a right to put a girl of her birth and breeding into such a position as this. . . .' He seemed to take the matter very much to heart.

Kashiwagi still lived in his father's house, all alone in the eastern wing. It was not a very lively form of existence for a man of his age, but this solitude was entirely of his own seeking. Sometimes he felt wretched, and thought of marrying the first girl who came his way. But then he remembered that his father was Grand Minister. There was no reason at all why he should content himself with a plebeian marriage, and he determined to remain as he was until he obtained the bride to whom he considered himself in every way entitled. To-night he sat all alone in his room puzzling till his head ached. . . . How should he ever manage to see her again, how contrive to catch even so hasty and unsatisfying a glimpse as he had enjoyed to-day? With other women it was different. There was always the chance that some religious vow or omen of the stars might drive them into the open. And if such things did not spontaneously occur, they could easily be arranged. . . . But with Nyosan these simple and recognized expedients would be of no avail. Nothing was more improbable than that she should ever leave her apartments; and it was difficult enough even to let her know of his feelings. However, he wrote a letter (by no means the first with which Nyosan's maid Kojijū had in recent days been entrusted): 'Madam, one day not long since, the springtime lured me to trespass within the barrier that hides your sovereign precincts from the grosser world, an audacity for which I fear you condemn me with the bitterest scorn. On that occasion, Madam, like the poet [1] of old, "I saw, yet did not see." Since when such a turmoil has reigned in my heart as only the vision of what those baffling shadows hid from me can ever put to rest.' With this was the poem: 'Though flowers of sorrow only, my hand could reach on

[1] In section 99 of the *Tales of Isé* the poet 'sees, yet does not see,' a lady in her carriage at the summer race-meeting.

the high tree, would I were back amid the shadows of that provoking night.'

Kojijū knew nothing about the 'day not long since,' and thought that the letter was an unusually pointless collection of stock lamentations. Waiting for a moment when Nyosan was alone she brought in the letter, saying: 'I wish your Kashiwagi were a little less faithful. I am tired of bringing these continual messages. Why then do I accept them? you ask. I suppose it is because I can see that he would be in despair if I refused. But why should I mind his being in despair? Really, I have not the least idea . . .' and she burst out laughing. 'What odd things you say,' replied Nyosan, taking the letter. By the allusion to 'seeing yet seeing not' she understood at once that he had caught sight of her during that unfortunate accident with the curtains. She blushed, not however at the idea of Kashiwagi's having seen her, but at the recollection that Genji had more than once warned her not to expose herself in Yūgiri's presence. Now she remembered that Yūgiri had on that occasion been sitting at Kashiwagi's side. What one saw, the other too would have seen. Her sole concern was lest Yūgiri should mention her carelessness to Genji, and then she would get a scolding. As had often occurred before, the task of writing an answer fell to Kojijū. Only a conventional acknowledgment was necessary, and she dashed off the following: 'Why you should speak of "seeing, yet not seeing" passes my comprehension. Despite the embarrassment in which your proximity placed us, you certainly posted yourself at a point of vantage where nothing was likely to escape you.' With this was the poem: 'Feel what you will, but tell not to the world that where no hand may reach, upon the mountain cherry's topmost bough your heart you fain would hang.'

The promised archery meeting at the New Palace took

place on the last day of the third month. Kashiwagi felt very little inclined for company, and if he accepted the invitation it was only in the vague hope of some second accident such as that which had occurred at the football match. Yūgiri at once noticed that his friend was still particularly silent and distracted. He knew well enough what this meant, and was genuinely distressed not only at the prospect of unpleasant scenes in which he would himself be involved, but also on Kashiwagi's account. For Yūgiri was extremely fond of him, and could never bear to see him, even for small everyday reasons, depressed or in ill-humour.

On this occasion Kashiwagi had come with the firm intention of behaving with perfect propriety, for not only did he stand in great awe of Genji, but also was extremely sensitive to public opinion in general, and nothing was more painful to him than the idea of his name figuring in the scurrilous gossip of the Court. If he had designs of any kind, they were not upon Nyosan but upon her cat. A fancy seized him that it would make him less miserable if he could get possession of this creature and have it always about him. But even this, as he well knew, was a mad idea, and under the circumstances to purloin the cat was not much easier than to make off with its mistress. The archery meeting proved uneventful. But a few days afterwards he was reminded of his project by seeing in the Crown Prince's rooms a very handsome kitten which had just arrived as a present from the Emperor's Palace. His Majesty's court-cat had just given birth to a large family of kittens, which had been distributed among his acquaintance. 'I happened the other day,' said Kashiwagi casually, 'to catch sight of a remarkably fine cat belonging to one of the ladies at Genji's palace. I never saw so handsome a creature. By the way, I think they said that it is

your sister Nyosan's. . . .' This was a very good move, for the Crown Prince had a passion for cats, and the subject was one that he was willing to converse upon for any length of time. He began questioning Kashiwagi about this marvellous cat of Nyosan's, which he did not remember to have seen. 'You have some of the same breed here,' said Kashiwagi, 'but there was something uncommon about that particular creature. It seemed so much more friendly and intelligent than any that I have ever known.' Thus began a long conversation upon the merits of different cats. The Crown Prince first of all borrowed those belonging to his wife, the Akashi Princess, and finally sent a message to his sister Nyosan asking if she would mind lending him hers. Upon its arrival every one agreed that it was undoubtedly a very fine cat. Kashiwagi, who knew the Crown Prince would give his sister a full account of the reception that her favourite had received, thought it better on this occasion not to display any great interest in the animal. But some days later he called again, on the pretext of giving the Prince a long promised lesson upon the zithern. 'Which is the fellow I saw at Genji's?' he asked, in the course of conversation. 'Is he still here? You have so many that I find it hard to keep them apart. . . .' But as a matter of fact he had already recognized Nyosan's cat, and was soon fondling it upon his lap. 'Isn't he behaving beautifully?' said the Crown Prince. 'Considering you only saw him in the distance the other day, it is extraordinary that he should recognize you. But he certainly does, for they are by nature very distrustful creatures, and will not let any one touch them unless they remember having seen him before. However, our cats often remember some one who has only been here for a moment and took no particular notice of them.' 'They may not have reasoning powers such as we have,' answered

Kashiwagi, 'but I am convinced that some of them at any rate have souls like ours.' Presently he added: 'Perhaps, as you have so many delightful cats of your own here, you would lend me this one of Nyosan's for a little while?' It was only after he had made this request that he realized how eccentric it must appear.

The cat lay close by him all night, and the first thing he did in the morning was to see to its wants, combing it and feeding it with his own hand. The most unsociable cat, when it finds itself wrapped up in some one's coat and put to sleep upon his bed—stroked, fed and tended with every imaginable care—soon ceases to stand upon its dignity; and when, a little later, Kashiwagi posted himself near the window, where he sat gazing vacantly before him, his new friend soon stole gently to his side and mewed several times as though in the tenderest sympathy. Such advances on the part of a cat are rare indeed, and smiling, he recited to the animal the following verse: 'I love and am not loved. But you, who nestle daily in my dear one's arms—what need have you to moan?' He gazed into the cat's eyes as he spoke, and again it began mewing piteously, till he took it up into his lap, and he was still nursing it thus when the first visitors of the day began to arrive. 'This is very sudden,' they whispered to one another. 'He used not to take the slightest interest in such creatures.' Presently a messenger arrived from the Crown Prince, asking that the cat might be sent back at once. But Kashiwagi refused to part with it.

CHAPTER VII

WAKANA

('YOUNG SHOOTS')

PART II

SO time[1] went by, bringing with it remarkably few changes either at home or in the world at large. Even so important an event as the abdication of the Emperor Ryōzen seemed to make very little difference, for though he had no heir of his own, his nephew the Crown Prince had now reached manhood, and would, it was confidently expected, merely carry on his predecessor's policy. The actual resignation came very suddenly, ill-health being given as a pretext. But during the eighteen years of his reign Ryōzen had never ceased ardently to long for an opportunity of escaping from a position that entailed at every turn the most dangerous concealments and deceptions.[2] He had many friends with whom it would be possible for him as a private person to associate in a far freer and more interesting way; moreover his childlessness (decreed, as he thought, by Heaven as a punishment for his unwilling impiety), would not weigh upon him so heavily when the future of the Throne was no longer involved.

As sister to the new Emperor, Nyosan naturally became more prominent than ever both at Court and in the estimation of the populace. But she was still very far from occupying a position anything like that of Murasaki, upon

[1] About three and a half years. This jump, which may read as though it were a 'cut' made by the translator, exists in the original.

[2] He was really Genji's son, not the old Emperor's. In sacrificing at the Imperial tomb, etc., he was committing an outrage upon the dead.

whom, as the years went by, Genji seemed to become more and more dependent. Yet it was from time to time clear that, despite his unchanging tenderness and confidence, Murasaki was not wholly contented with her present position. 'There are too many people in this house,' she would sometimes say; 'I wish I lived in some quieter place, where I could pursue my devotions undisturbed. I have reached an age when one cannot expect much more pleasure in this world, and had better spend the time in preparing oneself for the next.' But Genji always assured her that he too intended quite soon to quit the Court, and indeed would long ago have done so, had he not feared to leave her in solitude. 'Life here would be intolerable without you,' he said. 'Will you not wait till I have arranged to take my vows?'

One night, on going to Murasaki's apartments, Genji found she was not there. It was already long past midnight when she returned. There had been music, it appeared, in Princess Nyosan's rooms, and afterwards Murasaki had stayed talking to her. 'What did you think of Nyosan's playing?' Genji asked. 'It seems to me that she has really improved very much lately.' 'When she first came to live with us,' Murasaki answered, 'and I used to hear her playing in the distance, I confess I was rather surprised by her incompetence. But it is quite true that she now plays very nicely. This no doubt is all due to your frequent lessons.' 'Very likely,' he replied. 'The truth of the matter is, hardly any one gets properly taught nowadays. Giving music lessons, if one really does it properly, correcting every mistake and continually guiding the pupil's hands, is a troublesome, exhausting business. Moreover it takes up an immense amount of time. But both Suzaku and her brother the present Emperor evidently counted upon me to take charge at any rate of her zithern lessons, and I had

not the heart to disappoint them. Well, I am glad you think that, if in other ways she has got no great advantage through coming to live here, she has at least made progress in her music. When you were at a learner's stage I was unfortunately far busier than at present, and was never able to give you such long and thorough lessons, and lately one thing after another seems to have prevented our practising together. I was delighted, therefore, to hear from Yūgiri, the other day, the most enthusiastic accounts of your progress.'

It seemed to him strange indeed that Murasaki, whom he was still apt to regard as his 'little pupil,' should now in her turn be giving lessons to his grandchildren. But such was the case, at any rate as regards music. Nor for the matter of that was there any side of their education of which she would not have been well qualified to take charge. For she had always mastered fresh subjects with astounding ease and quickness, showing a versatility which often disquieted him, in view of the common opinion that such brilliance and rapidity of attainment often presage an early death. His only consolation was that her knowledge, however quickly garnered, was always solid and complete; whereas in the cases of precocity that he heard quoted a merely superficial variety of talents seemed to be the rule. She had recently celebrated her thirty-seventh birthday, and after talking for a while of their life together during all those years, Genji said: 'You must be very careful this year. You have reached a dangerous age [1] and ought to have special prayers said on your behalf. I will help you so far as I can; but probably there are all sorts of con-

[1] The soothsayers taught that there were several 'dangerous ages' in the lives both of men and women. A few centuries later thirty-three was commonly regarded as a woman's most dangerous age. Nowhere else is thirty-seven mentioned; but it is to be noted Fujitsubo died at the age of thirty-seven.

tingencies that it would never occur to me to provide against. Just think things over, and if there is any particular form of intercession that you would like to be used, let me know, and I will arrange it for you. What a pity that your uncle [1] is no longer alive. For the ordinary, every-day prayers he would have done excellently. . . .' For a while he was silent; but presently he said: 'What a strange life mine has been! I suppose few careers have ever appeared outwardly more brilliant; but I have never been happy. Person after person that I cared for has in one way or another been taken from me. It is long since I lost all zest for life, and if I have been condemned to continue my existence, it is (I sometimes think) only as a punishment for certain misdeeds [2] that at all times still lie heavily on my mind. You alone have always been here to console me, and I am glad to think that, apart from the time when I was away at Akashi, I have never behaved in such a way as to cause you a moment's real unhappiness. You know quite well that I do not care for grand society. Women with whom one has to behave according to set forms and rules are in my opinion simply a nuisance. It is only with people such as you, whom I have known all their lives, that I am really happy. But you know all this quite well, and there is no use in my repeating it. About Princess Nyosan—of course it was tiresome for you that I was obliged to have her here, but since she came, I have grown even fonder of you than before; a change you would have noticed quickly enough, if it had been my affection towards some one else that was on the increase! However, you are very observant, and I cannot believe you are not perfectly well aware. . . .' 'I cannot explain it,' she said. 'I know that to any outside person I must appear the happiest of women—fortunate indeed far above my deserts. But inwardly I am

[1] See vol. i, chap. v.

[2] His intrigue with Fujitsubo.

wretched. . . . Every day. . . .' She felt it would take a long time to explain, and had not the courage. 'As a matter of fact,' she said at last, 'I do not feel as though I should live much longer. You yourself have told me that this is a dangerous year. Let me meet the danger by doing what I have long been wanting to do. Then you will have less need for anxiety about me.' As usual, he declared that such a thing was out of the question; the mere thought of separation was unendurable; their daily meetings, the only semblance of happiness that remained to him. 'Surely, you would rather that I did not want you to go?' he asked, seeing her disappointment. She was now weeping bitterly, and he knew that the only way of putting a stop to this was to go on steadily for some while talking of indifferent topics. He began telling her about various people whom he had known years ago. It was natural that he should mention, among other acquaintances of old days, Lady Rokujō, the Empress Akikonomu's mother. 'Despite all that happened,' he said, 'I always think of her as the most brilliant creature that was ever at Court. Never have I encountered a sensibility so vivid and profound, and this, as you can imagine, made her at first a most fascinating companion. But there can never have been any one with whom it was more impossible to have relations of a permanent kind. It is natural that people should sometimes feel out of temper or aggrieved, and equally natural that, after a time, the feeling should wear off. But in her mind the smallest sense of injury grew deeper from day to day, till it had presently become coloured with emotions, the violence of which I cannot describe. The circumstances were such that it was, as she well knew, impossible for me to go to her whenever I wanted to, and equally impossible for her to receive me. But her pride demanded that every absence should be treated as a delinquency on my part,

requiring prolonged coldness on her side, and on mine an abject apology. In the end, all dealings with her became impossible. Unfortunately the secret of my relations with her was not well kept. Considering her temperament, nothing could have been more disastrous. The idea that her name was being bandied about the Court was torture to her, and though all the difficulties had arisen through her inordinate jealousy, and not through any fault of mine, I was extremely sorry for her, and in the end felt quite as wretched as though I had in fact been to blame. That is why I have taken so much trouble over Akikonomu's career, incurring thereby, as I well know, a great deal of unpopularity. But what does it matter if I am accused of favouritism and I know not what, so long as I feel that, in the grave, her mother can no longer doubt my good will? But I own that far too often in my life I have yielded to the impulse of the moment—have sought pleasures of which I afterwards bitterly repented.' He went on to discuss the characters of various other women whom he had known, and said after a while: 'I used to think that the Lady of Akashi, always conscious of her humble origins, was content with very little; and indeed the difficulty seemed to consist in persuading her to put herself forward at all. But I found out one cannot judge her by what appears on the surface. Modest, docile, self-effacing though she may seem to be, somewhere in the hidden depths of her nature there is more than a suspicion of self-will and pride.'

'Most of the people about whom you have talked,' answered Murasaki, now calm and composed, 'I never saw, and therefore do not know whether you are right about them or no. But with the Lady of Akashi I am now fairly well acquainted, and I confess that her extreme sensitiveness and pride, so far from being hidden away in some secret corner of her being, have always seemed to me

extremely conspicuous. Indeed, when with her I feel myself to be, in comparison, singularly lacking in reserve and sensibility. But though her shyness has often baffled me, I have persevered in the knowledge that the child understands me, and would put things right.' Here was a wonderful change! Genji could remember the time when it was impossible for him so much as to mention the Lady of Akashi's name; and here was Murasaki singing her praises. He knew that this had come about through her affection for the little Princess, and he felt thankful for the existence of the child. 'I do not think that you have any reason to feel over-sensitive or too easygoing in whatever company you may find yourself,' he replied. 'My experience has at least had the effect of teaching me how rare it is to find any one who so successfully steers the middle course. You are indeed a prodigy. . . . But I must go to Nyosan and congratulate her on the progress she has made with her music.'

To Nyosan it never occurred that any other woman could be inconvenienced by her presence in the house. She flung herself with childish absorption into the distractions of the moment. Just now it was her zithern that occupied her thoughts, and nothing else seemed of any importance. 'You have earned a holiday,' Genji said. 'I hope your teacher will always be as pleased with you as he is to-day. We have had some arduous times together, haven't we, and it is a comfort that something has come of it all at last. For the first time I really feel quite confident about you;' and so saying he pushed the zithern from him and fell fast asleep.

On the nights when Genji was away, Murasaki used to make her women read to her. She thus became acquainted with many of the old-fashioned romances, and she noticed that the heroes of these stories, however light-minded,

faithless or even vicious they might be, were invariably represented as in the end settling down to one steady and undivided attachment. If this were true to life, then Genji was, as he himself so often said, very differently constituted indeed from the generality of mankind. Never, she was convinced, never as long as he lived would his affections cease to wander in whatever direction his insatiable curiosity dictated. Say what he might, wish what he might, the future would be just what the past had been. With such thoughts going round and round in her head she fell asleep very late one night, only to wake a few hours later, long before it was light, with a violent pain in her chest. Her people did what they could for her, but with little effect. They were anxious to summon Genji; but she would not allow it, saying she did not wish him to be disturbed. She bore her pain as best she could till daylight came. She was now in a high fever and very restless. Again her maids begged her to let them summon His Highness. But Genji was still in the other part of the house, and she would not let them go to him. Presently, however, there came a note from the Crown Princess, and in the answer that she dictated Murasaki mentioned that she was unwell. The Princess felt alarmed, and guessing that Genji might not have heard, she sent a note to him, repeating the little that Murasaki had told her. In a moment he was at her bedside in a state of the utmost concern. 'Are you better?' he asked; but laying his hand upon her burning forehead he knew that she was not. At once he remembered their conversation of the other day. What if this were the very danger against which he had warned her? He was terrified.

Presently, seeing that he would not leave her, his people brought him his breakfast on a tray; but he did not touch it, and all day long he sat motionless by the bedside, gazing at her as though stupefied with grief. Thus many days passed.

She was evidently in great pain, not a morsel of food would she eat, nor did she once raise her head from the pillows. Meanwhile his messengers set out at top speed in all directions, arranging for prayers on her behalf to be said in every important temple throughout the land, and priests were sent for to work their spells at the bedside. She was now in great general distress and discomfort. The pain in her chest was no longer continual, but at each fresh attack was so severe that she hardly knew how to bear it. Every known remedy was tried, but nothing brought her any relief. It was apparent that she was very ill indeed, but Genji tried to find encouragement in the fact that there were now considerable intervals between these severe attacks. This showed, he thought, some natural resistance to the disease ; perhaps in time the intervals would gradually become long enough for health to reassert itself. But he was still in the greatest agitation and anxiety. He ought at this very time to have been supervising the arrangements for the celebration of Suzaku's fiftieth birthday. But he was utterly unable to give his mind to any outside subject, and left the business in other hands. Suzaku in his monastery heard the news of Murasaki's illness, and constantly sent messages of enquiry.

Week after week passed without any improvement. The only expedient which now remained untried was a change of scene, and, as this was recommended, Genji, with extreme reluctance, moved her into his old palace, the Nijō-in.

Often she was hardly conscious of what went on around her ; but once during a moment of comparative calm and lucidity she reproached Genji for not having allowed her to seek the consolations of religion while there was still time. But if it was terrible to see her thus carried from him by a stroke of fate, by this cruel sickness against which she struggled in vain, how much worse would it have been to

see her deliberately proclaim as worthless the love he bore her, to stand by while she cast away her beauty, her talents, her charm, and in preference to living with him chose as a more tolerable lot the gloom and squalor of a convent? 'Long, long before you ever thought of it,' he said, 'I earnestly desired to take my vows, and if I did not do so, it was wholly for your sake. Think what I should have felt if, after all, you had deserted me first. . . .'

She was now so weak that small hope of her recovery could be entertained. Again and again it seemed as though the end were come, and Genji lived in so continual an agony of suspense that during this whole time he never once went near Nyosan's rooms. There were no more music lessons, and week after week her lute and zitherns lay packed away in their wrappers. Many of the servants belonging to the New Palace had followed Murasaki to the Nijō-in, so that, what with her own rooms empty and so little stir of any kind going on, the place wore a strangely crepuscular air, and it seemed as though the whole life of this once so brilliant and joyous house had depended on Murasaki's presence, and on that alone.

One day Genji brought the Akashi Princess [1] to see her. 'Come quickly!' she called to them. 'Strange visions haunt me, and I am afraid to be alone.' The Princess had brought her little boy, Prince Niou, with her, and seeing him Murasaki burst into tears. 'I longed to watch him growing up,' she sobbed. 'Now he will not even remember me.' 'No, no,' Genji interrupted her, 'we must not let you talk like that. You are going to get well. Everything depends on what we think. If our thoughts are large and courageous, all kinds of good things will come our way; but if they are small and timid, then ill-luck will always attend us. And

[1] She was now Consort of the Emperor; but had not been proclaimed Empress.

it is just so with health. Even people of the highest birth, surrounded by every comfort, often worry themselves into the grave by fretting over every trifle, and never learning to take life as it comes. But you have always been so sensible and even-tempered. That is sure to stand you in good stead. . . .' And in his prayers to Buddha and to the Gods of our land he mentioned her great beauty of character, begging them to spare one who in her dealings with others had always shown such gentleness and forbearance. The priests and miracle-workers, who were on duty night and day, being told that her condition had reached a very critical phase, now redoubled their efforts, and for five or six days she seemed to be a little better. After that she had another bad attack; but things had gone on thus for so long that it seemed quite probable she would again rally. Of her final recovery Genji no longer had any expectation. Those in attendance upon her could discover no sign of any actual possession,[1] nor was it clear where the principal seat of her malady lay. But she was growing steadily weaker, and knowing that at any moment the end might come, Genji watched by her bedside hour after hour in an agony of continual suspense.

Among those whom recent changes in the government had tended to bring to the fore was Kashiwagi. He had for long past been one of the new Emperor's most intimate friends, and it was evident that, should he choose to take advantage of his position, a great future was in store for him. Realizing at last the hopelessness of his designs upon Nyosan, he had been prevailed upon to take as a concubine her elder sister, Lady Ochiba, who being the child of a waiting-woman and thus at a great disadvantage in the world, was glad enough to accept the position now offered to her by a very half-hearted lover. She was quite good-looking.

[1] By spirits, demons or the like.

Indeed, many would have regarded her as extremely attractive. But Kashiwagi was under no delusion that this alliance would in any way console him for his failure with the younger sister. His own old nurse was a sister of Nyosan's nurse (the mother of Kojijū, whose assistance had proved so fruitless before). It was through the relationship of these two old ladies that Kashiwagi had first heard of Nyosan. Indeed, while the Princess was still a child, his old nurse had whenever he visited her regaled him with continual stories of the little girl's clever sayings and pretty ways, and of Suzaku's extraordinary attachment to her; and it was these tales, repeated from her nurse to his, that had first aroused his curiosity. It was now long since Kashiwagi had attempted to hold any communication with her; but seeing the New Palace almost deserted (for since Murasaki's illness Genji was always at the Nijō-in and most of the servants had followed him), Kashiwagi felt that the time for a further attempt had come, and sending for Kojijū he begged her to assist him. 'I feel no compunction in the matter,' he said, 'for Genji is neglecting her scandalously. Indeed, he ought never to have accepted such a responsibility, for his affections were already engaged in many other quarters, and it was clear from the beginning that she would be left entirely to her own devices. Months pass without his ever going near her, and she leads (I gather) the dullest life imaginable. Suzaku has heard something of this, and is now extremely sorry that he did not give her to some commoner who would have appreciated the honour and devoted himself to making her happy. I am afraid he thinks that in providing for Ochiba he has found just such a steady-going, conscientious husband in me! I wish it were so; but though they are sisters and in some ways very much alike, Ochiba is Ochiba and Nyosan is Nyosan. That is all there is to be said about it. . . .' Kojijū was horrified.

'Come now!' she said. 'That beats all. You have just promised to devote your life to one sister, and now you tell me that the only person in the world you care for is the other.' 'I know it seems very odd,' said Kashiwagi, smiling. 'But I believe both Suzaku and his present Majesty would really have liked to give me Nyosan. And even now, since it is clear that Genji does not take any interest in her, I gather they are by no means displeased that I should feel as I do. They have her happiness to consider, and at present she is leading a miserable existence. . . . Come! I think you might oblige me by having one more try.' 'You are asking a great deal more than you suppose,' said Kojijū heatedly. 'To begin with, she knows that you have just married some one else. And then, do you really think you have reached such a position in the world that you can afford to make an enemy of Prince Genji? I may be mistaken, but it does not seem so very long . . .' She was beginning to remind him how recent was his present promotion, but so indignant was she at his audacity that the words tripped over one another and she suddenly broke off. 'That will do,' he said. 'Let us stick to the point. All I ask is that one day when you and she are alone together you should mention me. This surely cannot be very difficult now that so little is going on at the New Palace. I only want her to know that I have not forgotten her. I am not asking you to arrange a meeting, or indeed to say anything that could possibly bring a blush to the most modest cheek.' 'You are asking me to do precisely what is most likely to lead you both into trouble. Besides which, how can I suddenly begin talking about you? And for the matter of that, how am I to get at her when she is alone? It is hardly ever possible. . . .' So she fenced, trying her best to put him off. 'You are simply inventing difficulties,' he said impatiently at last. 'And why all this

fuss? Is it so strange a thing for a lady to be admired? Queens, I seem to remember, and Empresses too have sometimes been known to have their lovers. And who is Nyosan that you should think it sacrilege for any one to dream of her? Certainly the way she is treated at present does not suggest that Genji considers her to be of any great importance. You must learn to be less rigid in your ideas. . . .' 'If you think that Nyosan feels herself to be imperfectly appreciated and is on the look-out for some one to rescue her from her humiliations, you are very much mistaken. It was clearly understood from the beginning that this was not to be an ordinary marriage. She was extremely young, and came to the New Palace that, after her father's retirement from the City, she might have a fixed home and gain a little experience of polite life. All your talk of her being neglected or maltreated is beside the point.' She was beginning to lose her temper; but by adroit flattery he managed to prevent her flinging out of the room, and at last she said: 'If I ever do find myself alone with my Lady, I will speak of this. But even when Genji is away at the Nijō-in there are always a lot of people gathered round her curtains-of-state, and even by her chair there is generally some one in attendance. So don't ask me to make any promises.'

Day after day he badgered her, and at last, about the middle of the fourth month, there came from her a hurried note bidding him at once repair to the New Palace. He set out heavily disguised. His expectations were of an agreeable but by no means exorbitant kind. He did not for a moment suppose that she would admit him within her curtained dais. But she would, he hoped, be willing to converse with him, and if he were fortunate he might catch a glimpse of her sleeve, her fan, the train of her dress.

The Purification of the new Kamo Vestal was to take

place next day. Twelve of the ladies who were to attend her were in service at the New Palace and were now in their own rooms busily engaged in trimming and sewing. The other gentlewomen of the household were to be present at to-morrow's show and were busy with their preparations, so that in Nyosan's part of the house there were very few people about ; and even her confidential maid Azechi was absent, for she had received a sudden summons from a certain young captain (a member of the Minamoto clan, who had been paying her attentions for some time) and Nyosan had given her a holiday. Indeed, only Kojijū was in attendance, and she now led him noiselessly to a seat close by the side of her mistress's dais. Well, he thought, even should matters go no further, this was already a great deal more than he had expected when he set out.

Nyosan was asleep, and presently waking to find a man's form outlined against the curtains of her dais she naturally thought that it was Genji. But it was certainly not at all like Genji to sit nervously at the end of his chair in an attitude of constrained obeisance. For a moment she thought herself haunted by a ghost and hid her face in her hands ; but finding courage to look up once more she saw clearly enough that the visitor, though not Genji, was a person quite as real. Seeing that she was now awake, Kashiwagi began explaining his presence. Protestations, entreaties, apologies. . . . Who was he, and what did it all mean ? More terrified now than when she had thought him a ghost, Nyosan called for help. But no one came, for there was no one to hear her call. She was now trembling from head to foot and drops of perspiration stood out on her brow. In this exhibition of childish panic there was something that fascinated him ; but he was at the same time ashamed of having terrified her, and again began rather confusedly apologizing for his intrusion : ' My rank does not,

I know, entitle me to address you as an equal. But I had hoped all the same you would not consider me quite outside the pale of possible acquaintance. This claim at least I have upon your interest: that for years past you have occupied my thoughts to the exclusion of all else, as your father could bear witness. For utterly unable to lock up these feelings in my own breast (where indeed they were already grown rank with keeping) I long ago made confession of them, and found him by no means discouraging. But I was soon disillusioned. For weighed in the balance against one who had never given a moment's thought to you I, who loved you so dearly, was found wanting merely for lack of governmental dignities and royal pedigree. So soon as your lot was cast I determined to banish all thought of you for ever from my heart. But love had burnt down too deep into the core. Months, years passed, and still I thought of you, longed for you, wept for you; until, unable for an instant longer to support my misery, I rushed thus uncivilly into your presence, showing, as I fully perceive, a lack of consideration for your feelings that makes me blush for shame. But now that I am here, let me make amends by assuring you that you shall at least have no cause to repent of my having been admitted.' While he spoke she kept on asking herself who he was, and it was only gradually that it dawned upon her he could not very well be any one but Kashiwagi. This realization made her feel more than ever scared, and she did not manage to bring out a word in reply. 'You know so little of me,' he went on, 'that I am not surprised you should be somewhat nervous. But after all, such visits as this of mine to-night are of fairly frequent occurrence! If you persist in treating it as an affront, my misery will drive me to . . . But no! Have pity on me, say one kind word, and I will leave you.' Her complete lack of self-importance had, however, somewhat upset his

calculations. He had expected to find her haughty, stiff, unapproachable—in a word, all that women of such rank are generally supposed to be. Consequently it had never occurred to him that on this first visit he would by any conceivable chance get beyond the stage of a little stiff and unadventurous conversation. But to his surprise she was not grand, not proud, not contemptuous. She was only a singularly handsome girl, looking up at him with a shy, questioning yet almost trustful air. His good resolutions suddenly broke down. Soon the world and its inhabitants seemed nothing to him, nor would he have stretched out a hand to save them from instant destruction.

At last, lying by her side, he did not exactly fall asleep, or certainly had no mind to do so ; but must indeed have dozed a little. For suddenly there appeared before him the cat which he had once contrived to steal from her. It advanced towards him purring loudly, and wondering in his dream how it had got there, he supposed that he must have brought it with him. What had made him do that ? . . . So he was asking himself in his dream, when he woke with a start. There was of course no cat anywhere to be seen, and he wondered why he should have had so curious a dream.

The Princess felt that something terrible had befallen her ; and yet, so sudden had it all been, she could scarcely believe that anything had happened at all. ' This was in our destinies,' he whispered. ' Surely you too will admit that it could not but come,' and he began to tell her about the evening of the football match, and how he had seen her through the gap in her ill-fastened curtains, thanks partly to the plunging and tugging of the runaway cat.

So he *had* seen her—everyone had seen her on that unfortunate night ! But what happened then was a small disgrace indeed compared with what had followed as the

direct consequence of that unguarded moment. How should she ever face Genji again? So she asked herself, and burst into agonized tears—the tears of a child that is at the same time sorry and afraid. Tenderly, almost respectfully he helped her to wipe those tears away. It was growing light, and Kashiwagi, whose one thought for months past had been how to get into her rooms, was now face to face with the much more difficult problem of how to escape from them. However, he was determined not to go till he had obtained from her some sign that she did not altogether detest him. 'All this time you have hardly spoken a word,' he said. 'Do say something—no matter how unkind—that I may not go away from you for ever without even knowing the sound of your voice. For, having shown so plainly that I am distasteful to you, you need not fear that I shall ever trouble you again.'

In vain he entreated her. She was far too scared and penitent to utter a single syllable. 'You need not think that by prolonging your silence you will reduce me to any greater pitch of misery,' he said at last. 'More downcast than I am at this minute no human being could ever be.' Still she remained mute, and maddened by her obstinacy, he burst out: 'I see it is no use. Well, that decides matters for me. This is my last night on earth. It was the thought of you that alone gave life any value in my eyes, and now that I must think of you no more . . . But stay, are you so heartless that, knowing I have scarce an hour to live, you grudge me the gift of one kind word to take with me as my prize to the grave?' So saying he picked her up in his arms and carried her back to the outer room. The door by which he had entered last night was still open. Why did he not leave her? She watched him with consternation. Surely he did not intend to wait till some fresh harm was done? The house was still quite dark. But midnight

must by now be long past ; and thinking that out of doors there might already be a little light, he gently raised the shutter, and turning round caught (as he had hoped to) a clearer view of her form and face.

' I cannot think, I cannot move,' he cried, looking at her desperately. ' If you wish me to recover my senses, to be calm, to leave you, let me hear you say one word. Speak, though it be only in pity. . . .' Never had she seen any one behave like this ; what could it matter to him whether she spoke or not ? At this point, however, she did try to say something ; but so violently was she trembling that the words turned into meaningless jangle of sound. The room was growing lighter every moment. ' Listen ! ' he said excitedly, ' I had a wonderful dream last night. I know what it means and wanted to tell you, but how could I, when I found you hated me so ? Well, you shall not hear it. But time will show me whether I read it right or no.' He stumbled towards the door.

It was early summer, but never had autumn sky looked to him colder and sadder than that which now met his eyes. ' So dim to me the dawning world, I know not whither I go ; nor whence I came, save that the place was dank with showers of dew.' Such was his parting poem, and as he spoke it he held up the sleeve with which he had wiped her tears. Now that he was really going she plucked up heart a little, and managed in a faint voice to murmur the reply : ' Would that with the shadows of this dawn my grief might vanish, and of last night no token but a dream be left behind.' Her soft, half-childish voice was echoing in his ears as he left the room, and for the first time in his life he knew that it was no mere phrase when the poet said : ' Though the body move, the soul may stay behind.'

Instead of going home he went to his father's house, slipping in quietly without being seen. He lay down and

tried to sleep, but did not succeed. That dream. . . . It was, as a matter of fact, very unlikely that it could signify what it is generally supposed to,[1] and looking back in detail upon all that had happened he felt that there was no need to worry. He even, with a certain pleasure, recalled the details of his dream. But whether his dreaming of a cat really signified anything or no, he had committed what the world would consider a terrible crime. For many days afterwards he was haunted by a shame and fear that made it impossible for him to set foot outside his own door. These feelings indeed were gradually assuming an intensity quite out of proportion (as Kashiwagi kept telling himself) to the magnitude of his offence. No doubt he had behaved indiscreetly, and should the meeting have certain consequences the girl might conceivably find herself in an embarrassing position. But that was only a remote chance, and in all probability no harm of any kind had been done. Why was it that such a weight of shame and contrition had settled upon him? If he had seduced the Empress herself and his crime were already known, he could not have been in a greater panic—a state of mind all the more unreasonable since he was convinced that no punishment, not even death itself, could be more terrible than the torture that he was now enduring.

Long before Nyosan could possibly have shown any outward sign such as might betray her, he began to fancy that Genji was looking at him with a peculiar expression, and those supposedly accusing eyes filled him with terror and shame.

There is in many high-born women an abundance of natural appetite that the good manners instilled into them from childhood render invisible to the common eye. But upon the mildest provocation this tendency will manifest

[1] Dreaming of a cat signifies that a child will be born.

itself in the most surprising ways. With Nyosan, however, this was not the case. Her innocence was every bit as great as it seemed. The experiences of that fatal night had left in her mind no impression but that of the most abject terror. She could not convince herself that all was safely over, that no one had betrayed them, and hardly daring to appear even among her own people she spent week after week in the darkness of the back room. She felt that something had gone wrong with her, and at last, unaided by any outside person, she realized what was amiss.

Genji heard that she was indisposed and hurried round in alarm to the New Palace. Had a fresh burden now been added to the already unbearable load of his anxiety? He was glad to find her, to all appearances, uncommonly well. All he noticed was that she looked very much ashamed of herself and persistently refused to meet his gaze. No doubt she was cross with him for having left her so long to her own devices, and in order that she might better understand how he had come thus to neglect her, he began describing Murasaki's illness. 'I do not think she can last much longer now,' he said after a while, 'and you may be certain that you will never find yourself neglected like this again. But Murasaki has been with me since she was a child, she has become an inseparable part of my life, and you will guess, I am sure, that during these last weeks I have been in no condition to think or speak of anything else. I am sure you are not so unreasonable as to be cross with me. . . .' He was gone again. Evidently her people had not told him the nature of her malady. But in the long run he would have to know, and as soon as she was alone Nyosan burst into a flood of tears.

So seldom did Genji now visit the New Palace that he had much to do there and did not intend to return immediately.

He was wondering uneasily what condition affairs would be in when he got back to the Nijō-in. Suddenly a messenger arrived announcing that Murasaki appeared to be sinking fast. In a moment all else was forgotten, and with darkness closing about his heart he rushed round to his old palace. It seemed to take an interminable time to get there. At last, coming into view of the house, he saw that something terrible must indeed have happened, for the whole space between the main building and the highway was filled with a surging throng of people, while from within came a continual sound of weeping.

Not looking to right or left, he tore towards her apartments, where he was met by one of her maids. 'All day she had seemed much better,' said the lady. 'This faintness came upon her quite suddenly.' Within, all was weeping and confusion. Many of those that had served her longest, frantic with grief, were calling upon death not to leave them behind; while such of the priests and miracle-workers whose duty for the day was over were noisily dismantling their altars and making ready to depart. There was nothing unusual in this; their places would soon be taken by new-comers and the long services of intercession would continue. But to Genji there seemed on this particular day to be an air of finality in the methodical clatter of their departure. He rushed towards them, sharply bidding them make their exit more quietly. Murasaki was now unconscious, but he was convinced that this was merely a trance, due to 'possession' by some evil influence, and so far from allowing the priests to slacken their efforts, he now sent for a number of celebrated miracle-workers from all parts of the land, and bade them preside over a grand service of exorcism. The form of their prayer was that, even though the sick woman's days were numbered, she might in accordance with the Promise of the Immov-

able One,[1] be granted a half-year of reprieve. The priests, intent upon their ritual, bent so close over the burnt offering that it seemed as though the smoke was rising not from the altar but from their very heads. The most Genji now hoped for was that she might for a brief spell recover consciousness before she died. The thought that she would perhaps never know him again, that he would never be able to ask her forgiveness for all that he had done amiss, threw him into such a state of agitation and despair as those about him had seldom witnessed, and they felt it was impossible he should survive her loss. Perhaps the sight of so deep a sorrow touched even Buddha's heart; be that as it may, signs of a definite 'possession'—the first that had been visible for many months—now became manifest in the patient, and the exorcists were soon able to transfer this possessing spirit to the body of a small boy whom they had brought with them to act as medium. While, through this boy's mouth, the spirit railed against the priests who had forced it to do their bidding, Murasaki gradually regained consciousness, and it was with mingled feelings of joy and horror that he watched on the one hand her slow recovery, and on the other the ravings and contortions of the boy. At last, subdued to reason by the spells and passes of the exorcists, the spirit still speaking through the boy's mouth said quietly: 'Let every one save Prince Genji leave the room. What I must now say, no one else but he must hear. You have plagued me this long time past with your spells and incantations. I do not love you for it, of that you may be sure. And I would here and now take my vengeance on you all; it is not that I lack the power . . . rather, I have chosen of my own free will to postpone the task; for strange though you may think it, we ghosts love as we loved on earth; and when I saw Prince

[1] Fudō.

Genji frantic with grief, shattered by long days of watching and apprehension—when I saw that, did I not leave my work a while, he too would fall beneath my blow—then I was sorry for him ; I, that have become a foul and fiendish thing, pitied him as tenderly as any living creature can pity. That is why I have shown myself to you. I did not mean that you should ever know. . . .'

The hair stood upright on the boy-medium's head, while at the same time huge tears trickled down his cheeks. Where had he seen before this strange blending of rage and misery ? Yes. Such had been the face of the apparition that had appeared at Aoi's bedside. He was dumbfounded. Nothing then, not death itself, could alter the hideous trend of evil that the passionate agony of those old days had set upon its course. All else was fading, slipping away. But this terrible thing had never changed.

He took the medium by the hand, and leading him to a safe distance from Murasaki's bed, he said : ' Give me some proof. . . . Speak of something that I shall remember, but no one else could possibly know about. Then I shall believe that you are she. But not till then ; for fox-spirit and the like often cause great harm by passing themselves off as the spirits of our dead friends, and I must be on my guard.' While Genji spoke thus, the medium was shaken by violent sobbing. At last a voice sounded amid the sobs, and though distorted by anguish, it was, past all denying, the proud passionate voice of Rokujō : ' You know me well enough ; for changed though I may be, I still remember what it means when you put on that stupid, innocent air. You at least are what you always were—heartless, dishonest. . . .' Again the voice was choked by sobs. He was filled with pity, but, at the same time, a kind of repulsion, and made no attempt to reply. Presently the medium spoke again : ' Do not think that, even in my

most distant wanderings, banished amid the realms of outer space, I have ever for a moment been ignorant of what was passing here on earth. All that in penitence you have done for my daughter, the Empress's sake, is known to me, and I thank you for it. And yet—it is strange—nothing now seems the same to me. She is mine, I have not forgotten her. But do not think that I love her as a living woman loves her child. Nothing, not one thought nor feeling, have I brought with me unaltered into the world of death, save this insensate passion, that even on earth made my own nature loathsome and despicable to me. Rage, jealousy, hatred—they alone cling to my soul and drag it back each moment closer to the earth.

'And do you know what hurt me more than all your cruelty to me when I was alive? It was to hear you entertaining this friend of yours with stories of my "bad temper," my "grievances," my "inordinate jealousy."[1] I should have thought that the dead at least might be spared such insults and lies! A thousand times I have asked myself how you of all men, you with your fine breeding, could speak of me thus to another woman. Bad as I was before, this fresh insult has worked in me a ghastly change. Never before have I done harm to those on earth, but now—Listen! If you think I have any desire to prey upon this woman on the bed, you are wrong. I want to leave her, to leave you all; but if you wish to be rid of me, put an end to all these spells and incantations, that can but keep me at a little distance, and use these mighty miracle-workers and priests, whom you have set like a hedge about you, to pray for my soul's release, for the cancelling of all my sins. Do not think that because for the moment I could stand your dronings and buzzings no longer—your prayers and scripture-readings that beset me like tongues

[1] See above, p. 186.

of flame—do not think that I am conquered. Back I shall come and back again, till in your liturgies I hear some word of comfort for my own soul. Say masses for me, read them night and day. Tell my daughter the Empress to pray for me with all her heart; and bid her never for one instant, though she may fall from favour and another be set in her place, never so much as in a dream to let one envious or jealous thought creep into her heart. She has guilt enough on her conscience, having spent many months at Ise,[1] where the name of the Blessed One may not be spoken.'

The medium continued to rave; but this conversation with a ghost was too eerie to be prolonged. Already those who had been asked to retire from the room must be asking themselves what was happening. He readmitted them, had the boy-medium placed in a sealed room,[2] and Murasaki carried secretly to a different part of the house.

Somehow or other a rumour got started that Murasaki was dead, and Genji had the painful experience of receiving innumerable letters of condolence. It was the day of the Kamo festival, and among the courtiers returning from the Shrine many jokes were made on the topic of Murasaki's sudden fall and eclipse. Some one said that since she had lost her power to charm the sunlight[3] it was not to be wondered at that the rain should have washed her away. And another: 'Prodigies of that kind never last long, and perhaps it is as well for them that they do not. Otherwise they might tend to fare like the cherry-blossom in the proverb.[4] Did they not so quickly retire from the scene

[1] As it was a Shintō shrine, the rival religion (Buddhism) could not be mentioned there.

[2] Partly with the idea of securing Murasaki's safety; partly lest the words spoken by Rokujō through the boy's mouth should be overheard.

[3] A pun on Genji's name Hikaru, 'The Shining One.'

[4] 'If it were in our power to keep the cherry-blossom on the tree, we should cease so much to admire it.'

they would end by getting all the fun into their own hands and spoiling things for every one else. It is nice to think of that poor little Princess Nyosan coming into her own again. I am sure it was high time. . . .'

Kashiwagi had stayed at home on the previous day, but had found the time hang so heavily on his hands that to-day he set out for the Festival, taking his brothers with him in the back of the carriage. On the way home they heard the rumour that was being bandied from coach to coach. The brothers were by no means convinced of its truth, and to offer premature condolences would be very embarrassing. But they decided that there could be no harm in paying an ordinary visit, as though in ignorance of what was being said. Their first impression upon arriving at the New Palace was that the end had indeed come. On every side rose the sound of weeping and wailing. No sooner had they entered than Murasaki's father Prince Hyōbukyō rushed past them into the house, obviously in a state of frenzied agitation.

Presently Yūgiri came out, wiping the tears from his eyes, and Kashiwagi said to him: 'Tell us quickly what has happened. We heard very bad news on the road, but were loth to believe it, and have come, as we intended to do in any case, merely to enquire. . . . We hoped for some improvement. This has been going on for so long. . . .' 'She has indeed been in a very serious condition for some weeks past,' said Yūgiri. 'Finally, early this morning, she lost consciousness altogether. However, at this point the presence of a "possession" became obvious, and when this had been dealt with, she came to, and is now, I hear, considered not to be in any immediate danger. Of course, this is a great relief to us all. But I am afraid there is not really much hope. . . .' It was obvious that he was deeply moved. He must have been crying a great deal,

for his eyes were quite swollen. 'Why should he mind so much?' Kashiwagi asked himself, remembering that Yūgiri had been brought up by his mother's family, and had, ostensibly at any rate, always been kept at a distance from his stepmother. And at once, suspecting others (as we always do) of harbouring the same guilty secrets as ourselves, he began imagining that Yūgiri not Genji had been the partner of Murasaki's great romance.

A message now came from Genji asking the visitors to excuse him from appearing in person. 'You will forgive me, I know,' he said, 'when I tell you that we have all been taking part in what had every appearance of being an actual death-scene. Our gentlewomen have not yet had time to recover their composure, and I myself am still, I confess, far too agitated to receive you properly. I hope you will do me the honour of repeating your visit at some time when I am better able to appreciate it.' The mere mention of Genji's name filled Kashiwagi with shame and embarrassment; he for his part was glad it was upon so distracted an occasion that he had come to the house. As for repeating the experiment, the others might come if they chose, but he most assuredly would not be with them.

Meanwhile Murasaki remained conscious; but the services of intercession were continued, and to them Genji added secret masses for the Release of Rokujō's soul. And he had reason enough of every kind to hope ardently that these would be successful. Even during her lifetime he had experienced in fashion sinister enough the evil potency of her rage; and now that she was in another world, changed into a thing devoid of all human pity or compunction, it was hideous to think that her malice towards him was still unappeased. Apparently all that he had done for Akikonomu was useless! But what was the good of trying to

please women ? If they were not fundamentally evil, they would not have been born as women at all.[1] Perhaps he ought not to have spoken of her to Murasaki. But he remembered the occasion perfectly well ; it was the night before Murasaki's illness began, and really he had not said anything very bad. . . . It was difficult enough to satisfy the living ; but existence was intolerable if even one's most intimate conversations might at any moment let loose the vindictive fury of the dead.

Murasaki still longed to receive the tonsure, and thinking that the ceremony might help her to rally a little, Genji at last consented. Her reception into the Order was more a semblance than a reality, for no attempt was made to do more than cut away a lock or two from the crown of her head, and only five of the Ten Vows were administered. During the whole ceremony Genji, regardless of convention, sat by her side, and with tears in his eyes helped her to repeat her responses.

The fifth month was now closing, and the weather was exceedingly hot. She began again to have frequent fainting-fits, and grew much weaker. But though her mind often wandered, she was perfectly well aware of the tense anxiety with which Genji watched her progress. She had herself no desire or hope of recovery, and if she now occasionally forced herself into a sitting posture or managed to swallow a little broth, it was that Genji might feel her to be still a living creature, rather than (as she knew herself to be) a strangely lingering ghost. At the beginning of the sixth month she astonished and delighted him by even looking about her a little. But he was still in great alarm, and did not once succeed in getting across to the New Palace.

Nyosan's condition was now quite definitely established ; but she was not by any means in bad health. Indeed, save

[1] A Buddhist doctrine.

for the fact that her complexion was rather sallow and her appetite not so good as usual, she had not much to complain of. Kashiwagi had not been able to restrain himself from several times repeating his visit, but the girl had made it abundantly plain that she would much rather he left her in peace. The truth was that Kashiwagi had made no such impression upon her as could outweigh her fear of getting into trouble with Genji. True, her lover was one of the handsomest and most talented figures at Court, and many a girl's head would have been completely turned by his advances; but to Nyosan, used as she was to Genji's far more striking looks and personality, this young man seemed almost insipid in character, no more than passable in appearance, and (Palace Counsellor though he was) none the more impressive on that account to one whose upbringing had been such as hers.

Her old nurse and gentlewoman had, of course, long ago discovered the condition she was in. 'Do you remember exactly when it was that His Highness was last here?' one of them said. 'It seems to me as though it were a very long time ago.' They felt rather uneasy about the matter, but thought it their duty to inform Genji. He at once came round to the New Palace.

It was as a matter of fact (Genji remembered this quite clearly) more than a year. . . . Surely there must be some mistake? He said nothing to her about the reason of his visit. She did, he thought, perhaps look a trifle out of sorts, and he treated her with every mark of tenderness and concern. Really, she was a charming girl. Now that, after being so many times obliged to postpone his visit, he had at last managed to get here, he ought to stay for a night or two. And so he did; but he was all the while in such a state of anxiety about Murasaki that he could think of nothing else, and spent most of the time in

writing messages to her. 'That's good!' said one of Nyosan's ladies indignantly. 'He saves up all his letter-writing till he comes here. We appreciate the compliment, I am sure!' Kojijū for her part only wished that Kashiwagi took a like view of Genji's visit. No sooner did the young man hear of it than he fell into a state of violent agitation and began pouring in upon Nyosan a stream of letters, couched in the most hectic terms of jealousy and desperation—all of which it fell to Kojijū's lot to deliver.

'Don't show me these tiresome things,' said Nyosan, when Kojijū, seeing Genji go to fetch something from Murasaki's old rooms, hastily produced one of these frenzied epistles. 'I do wish you would just read what he says here in the margin,' Kojijū pleaded. 'I am sure you would feel sorry for him. . . .' So saying, she unfolded the letter and had just placed it in Nyosan's hands, when there was a noise of footsteps. A sudden panic descending upon her, Kojijū glided from the room. There was no time to destroy the letter or lock it up in a safe place. Her heart beating wildly, Nyosan stuffed it under the mattress of the couch upon which she lay.

Next morning he rose early, wanting to go back to the Nijō-in before the sun became unpleasantly strong. 'Where is that fan I had yesterday?' he asked his servant. 'This one is no good at all. I think I must have left it where I was sitting with the Princess yesterday evening. I had better go and look.' Having hunted high and low, he went towards the couch where Nyosan had lain, and suddenly noticed that a piece of light blue paper was sticking out from under her mattress, which was pushed slightly out of place. Without paying any particular attention to what he was doing, he pulled out this piece of paper, and glancing at it, saw that it was covered with writing in a man's hand. He noticed too that it was heavily scented,

and in every way as elegantly devised as a note could possibly be. Moreover, oddly enough he knew the writing (of which there was plenty, for it covered both sides of a double sheet). There could be no mistake. This was Kashiwagi's hand. His servant, who had brought a mirror into the room and now began to do his master's hair, was not in any way surprised to see him take possession of the note, for he supposed it to be one that Genji and Nyosan had been reading together on the day before. But Kojijū, who was also present, was startled to observe that it was of the same colour as the letter she had herself delivered. While serving Genji's breakfast she never for an instant took her eye off this blue letter, that lay folded beside his bowl. Of course it could not be the same. Lots of people wrote on paper like that. The mere fact that it had been left lying about showed that it must be something quite different. The Princess would never have been so mad. . . .

Meanwhile Nyosan was quietly sleeping. What a feather-hearted little creature she was! He had always suspected that expressions of feeling conveyed nothing to her mind whatever; and from the way in which she left such a letter as this (for he had already cast an eye over it) lying where any one might find it, he was convinced that its contents had no meaning for her at all. It was fortunate indeed that it was he who had found it, and not some outside person, upon whom the fact that she was receiving such letters would make a wholly erroneous impression.

'What did you do with that note I brought yesterday?' Kojijū said, when Genji left the room. 'I saw His Highness looking just now at a letter that looked very much like it.' Nyosan immediately remembered only too well what she had done with it. 'Where did you put it?' went on Kojijū, seeing that her eyes had suddenly filled with tears. 'When we heard some one coming, I thought it might look as though

there were a secret between us if I were found alone with you, and to be on the safe side I made off as fast as I could. But as a matter of fact it was some while before His Highness actually entered the room, and I supposed that during this time you would have managed to find somewhere safe to put the letter.' 'I had only that very moment begun reading it when he came in,' she sobbed. 'I just stuffed it away anywhere I could ; and then I forgot about it. . . .' Helplessly she indicated the place under the mattress. Kojijū went and examined it. 'There's nothing there now,' she said. 'This is an awful business. I would give anything that it should not have happened. It was only the other day that Kashiwagi begged me to make you be more careful. He is terrified of Prince Genji getting wind of this. And now, no sooner do I put a letter in your hands than you leave it just where it was most likely to catch His Highness's eye. However, it is all of a piece with the way you have always carried on. I shouldn't say it, but you have no more idea how to behave than a baby. First of all you leave all your screens in disorder and let him see you. Then you allow him to go on for month after month writing desperate letters to you, and finally drive him to such a pitch of madness that he insists upon being allowed to see you. It was I who arranged it, I own ; but I don't mind telling you I would never have dreamed of bringing him, if I had supposed that you could look after yourself no better than you did. Well, I'm sorry for you both ! ' So she scolded the girl, speaking to her as though she were a person of her own class ; for Nyosan was so completely lacking in self-consequence that it was difficult for those about her to remember she was Genji's favourite and the Emperor's sister.

At Kojijū's harsh words she only wept the more. During the course of the day her people noticed that she was in

very low spirits and ate nothing at all. 'Instead of fussing all the while about Lady Murasaki, who, if she was ever ill at all, is now perfectly recovered, His Highness might give a little more attention to our young lady, who really has got something the matter with her,' they said.

As soon as he was alone Genji pulled out the letter and studied it more attentively. He did not now feel so certain that it was written by Kashiwagi. The writing indeed looked to him much more like an attempt to imitate Kashiwagi's hand, and he came to the conclusion that it must be the work of some waiting-woman, who had concocted the letter as a practical joke. But the style did not in the least bear out this supposition. Granted the document was genuine, several facts emerged: the writer had been in love with Nyosan for several years, he had once at any rate obtained access to her, but now something had gone wrong, and the writer of the letter was evidently very ill at ease. All this could have been deduced without difficulty by any one who saw the letter. Since when (Genji wondered) had people taken to writing in this reckless and inconsiderate manner? For letters are ticklish things; one never knows into whose hands they may fall—as he himself had good reason to remember.[1] But, after all, there are ways of protecting oneself. Never had Genji in his life (or so he now felt convinced) addressed a woman whom he loved in terms so crude, so tactless, so flatly incriminating; and he was filled not so much with anger at Kashiwagi's presumption as contempt for his stupidity.

Genji's thoughts ran on. What must he do with Nyosan? Of course there was no longer any doubt how she came to be in her present condition. The simplest thing would be to go on as if nothing had happened. This, he felt, would have been impossible if the knowledge of their intrigue had

[1] Cf. vol. ii, p. 91.

come to him from outside. But having made the discovery for himself, he was free to use it as he chose. Yet was he free? He tried to imagine himself visiting her, joking, pretending to know nothing. . . . It was easy enough to decide on such a course, but utterly impossible to carry it out. He knew that when he was merely amusing himself with some one, without really being in love, the discovery that this person was receiving attentions from another man at once made it impossible for him to continue his own mild dalliance. In such cases it galled him that another should receive what he himself had never even claimed. And now Nyosan. . . . No, this was something that he could never forgive. As for Kashiwagi, his conduct had been of an insolence and treachery such as Genji would not have imagined any human being to be capable of. Suddenly it occurred to him that there was a certain resemblance between this episode and another, in which he himself had figured. But that was a very different affair. There is something special about an Emperor's concubines. To begin with, many of them hold their position for reasons of State; no personal tie attaches them to their Master, and it is assumed that they are free to seek distraction elsewhere. Then again, the ladies and gentlemen of the Emperor's entourage are through the very nature of their service thrown together in a way peculiar to the Court, and intimacies, such as could not without the gravest scandal be divulged, are constantly springing into existence, to be suspended at a moment's notice if they are in any danger of being observed. Nor in the promiscuous life of the Palace are such shifts and changes, such sudden alliances and dissolutions, likely to attract the slightest attention. But this seduction of Nyosan was an entirely different matter. She, on her side, knew quite well all the circumstances that had induced him to take charge of her,

knew that he had expended infinite pains in her education and improvement, had risked on her behalf a breach with the one being to whom his whole heart was drawn. Such ingratitude was unthinkable! That any one who belonged to him should turn elsewhere for affection—and to a person such as Kashiwagi—was more than he could be expected to endure. And yet, unless he were willing to make himself ridiculous, the alternatives to enduring it were not very obvious.

Suddenly it occurred to Genji to ask himself whether perhaps his father, the Old Emperor, had not been in just the same fix. No doubt he too (though Genji had never before suspected it) knew perfectly well what was going on, and had merely pretended not to see. There was no denying it: that was a disgraceful affair, as indeed he had always known; though all that his father might have suffered through it he had never till this moment guessed.

Murasaki at once saw, when he arrived, that something was on his mind. She thought that he had reluctantly left the New Palace merely out of pity for her, and was worried at being obliged to spend so much time out of Nyosan's company. 'You really need not have come back so soon,' she said. 'I am much better now, while Nyosan, they tell me, is very poorly.'

'She looks a little bit out of sorts,' he answered. 'But there is nothing serious the matter with her, and I do not feel there is any need for me to remain there. But her family makes a great fuss. The Emperor is always sending to enquire after her. A messenger came while I was there to-day. I do not think he is really worried, but his father [1] expects it of him, and is always keeping him up to the mark. They both of them have their eye on me, and so I have to be extremely careful.' 'I don't mind what the Emperor

[1] Suzaku.

thinks,' Murasaki replied. 'But I should be very sorry indeed if my illness caused Nyosan to think you were neglecting her. And even if she understands, I am so afraid that some of her gentlewomen may make mischief. . . .' 'You are evidently far more solicitous concerning Nyosan than I am myself,' he said, laughing. 'And for your sake I must try to take my responsibilities more seriously. But I fear I shall never succeed in working out what effect my actions may have on her maids and dependents. You may think me heartless, but I confess that if I avoid getting into trouble with the Emperor, I shall be quite satisfied. I am hoping that next time I go to the New Palace you will be able to come with me.' 'I am afraid that will not be for some while yet,' she answered. 'Do, I beg of you, go and live there again at once. It would be such a comfort to Nyosan. I will follow when I can.' But days passed without his making the move.

Nyosan regarded his absence as a sign that she was in disgrace. True, he had often before deserted her for weeks on end; but in those days she had done nothing bad, and it had therefore not occurred to her that his staying away might be meant as a punishment. She was also terrified lest her father should hear that Genji never came to see her; for she had got it into her head that Suzaku too would at once think she had done something wicked.

The next time Kashiwagi tried to send a letter, Kojijū, rather glad of an opportunity to bring the business to an end, told him flatly what had happened to his last note. Kashiwagi was appalled.

If such an affair as this went on for a considerable time it was almost inevitable (he knew) that some rumour of it should eventually leak out. But there was no reason why any actual proof should exist; and if the parties concerned chose to deny it stoutly enough, people often ended by

believing that nothing much had really happened. And here was Nyosan, after the infinite care that he had taken not to arouse the faintest suspicion on any side, leaving under the very nose of the person principally concerned a document of the most incriminating kind. It was the hottest time in the year ; but at the receipt of this news he turned so icy cold from head to foot that he veritably thought he would freeze to death. It was not as though Genji had been a stranger (though even then it would have been bad enough, considering his rank and influence). Always, for years past, it had been for Kashiwagi that he had sent whenever either pleasure or business demanded the presence of some chosen friend whom he liked and could trust. And this obvious partiality of Genji for his company had been one of the greatest joys in Kashiwagi's life. There could now be no question of their ever being friends again. That was of course the worst ; but the actual and immediate question of how to behave towards Genji for the moment fretted Kashiwagi till he became positively ill. If he stayed away altogether every one would want to know the reason, and Genji himself, if by any chance he had failed to be absolutely convinced of Kashiwagi's guilt, would then no longer be in doubt. Beset by continual panic and forebodings he shut himself up indoors. Constantly he assured himself that this overwhelming sense of guilt was out of all proportion to the magnitude of his crime. But he could not get out of his head the idea that by this one act he had forfeited all right to exist.

He felt now that it was madness on his part not to have foreseen what would happen. From the moment she exposed herself on that ill-fated evening of the football match he ought to have known she would prove utterly undependable. No doubt Yūgiri, to whom he had certainly betrayed his excitement on the way home that night, had

known quite well what was in store for him, should he attempt to carry on a secret intrigue with a creature so completely lacking in the most elementary sense of responsibility or even loyalty (for he could hardly imagine that any one could merely *forget* to put a note of that kind somewhere out of sight). But though he tried at times to escape from his own sense of guilt by reflections of this kind, he was all the while extremely sorry for Nyosan and fully conscious of the terrible predicament in which he had landed her.

At last Genji visited the New Palace. Of course there could be no question now of his ever again feeling any affection for her ; yet, so much sympathy did her obvious wretchedness and terror arouse in him, that he found himself longing to console her, caress her—to pretend, in fact, that everything was the same as before. But this lasted for a very short while. Expenditure on her behalf, solicitude for her comfort—these were easy enough ; but when it came to speaking to her in such a manner that those present would not detect any embarrassment or frigidity, then he was hard put to it indeed, and by his own unavailing struggles knew something of what her misery must be. It soon became clear that he did not intend to refer in any way to what had happened ; but this, so far from giving Nyosan confidence, seemed only to imprint a more abject look of shame and contrition upon her downcast face. She could not be certain how much he had discovered or what conclusions he had drawn ; and to look as though she were being scolded, when precisely the opposite was happening, in itself betrayed her guilt. Such behaviour was indeed part and parcel of the same utter childishness that had brought about this whole catastrophe.

Meanwhile the news of Nyosan's condition reached Suzaku in his mountain retreat. He was of course delighted.

He knew that during the worst period of Murasaki's illness Genji had for months on end been absent from the New Palace ; but this, under the circumstances, was perfectly natural. It appeared that even after her partial recovery Genji had continued to be perhaps unduly nervous of leaving her ; and this protracted neglect, for which Nyosan would see no adequate cause, had no doubt tried her patience. Not that in any of her letters she had ever complained. But it was only too likely that some of her people had, in their indiscreet zeal, talked against Genji at Court or in social gatherings elsewhere. Suzaku could only hope that Nyosan had herself done nothing to countenance such gossip. He had lost interest in all other worldly matters ; but his affection for his daughter remained as keen as ever. The letter that he now wrote to her happened to arrive on one of the rare occasions when Genji was at the New Palace. ' I am afraid it is a long time since you heard from me,' he said ; ' but I always think about you a great deal. As soon as I heard of your condition I put a special supplication on your behalf into my prayers. Please be sure to let me know how you get on. I am afraid that, through no one's fault, you have been left a great deal alone in the last few months Remember that, even if this should continue, it is no fault of Genji's ; and above all things avoid giving him or any one else the impression that you are in the slightest degree resentful of these long absences.'

The position was a very difficult one. Genji had not intended ever to speak to Suzaku of what had happened. But sooner or later the girl's father would see that Murasaki's illness was quite unconnected with the present estrangement. Unless he were told the truth Suzaku would think that Genji had broken all his promises in the cruellest and most treacherous manner. ' How are you going to reply ? ' he said, turning to Nyosan ' I wonder who told him that

I was neglecting you ? If we are nowadays on rather distant terms, it is certainly through no fault of mine.' Blushing deeply, she turned away her head. ' I think what most bothers your father,' he continued, ' is the knowledge that you are so childish and entirely unable to look after yourself. You must try in future to show him that he need no longer worry about you on that account. I had not meant to tell him about this business. But it is clearly impossible that you and I should be on the same terms as before ; and if he is going to interpret this change as a dereliction on my part, I should be obliged to explain matters to him. I had not meant to discuss this even with you ; but while we are on the subject, I may as well say that if you have found some one who can make you happier than I do, by all means go to him. . . . I think that from your own point of view you are behaving very imprudently ; but whether that is so, events will prove.

' It does not in the least surprise me that you should feel as you do. For one thing, novelties are inevitably more interesting, and you have known me since you were a child. But the real trouble is that I am too old for you. It is true. I am hideously old. Indeed, what in the world could be more natural than that an infant like you should desire to escape from me ? I only make one condition. So long as your father is alive we must keep up the pretence, tiresome old person though you may find me, that I am still your husband. Afterwards you may do as you like. But I cannot bear that Suzaku should know what has in reality been the end of this wonderful marriage of ours, upon which he built all his hopes. It is not at all likely that he will live much longer. If you do not wish to add to his sufferings, please let us for the present have no more episodes of this kind.'

But as he said the words he caught in his own voice a

familiar intonation. How often, years ago, those responsible for his upbringing had adopted just this tone, and how dreary, how contemptible he had thought their self-righteous homilies. 'Boring old man!' That was what she must be thinking, and in sudden shame he relapsed into a complete silence, during which he drew her writing-case towards him, carefully mixed the ink and arranged the paper. But Nyosan was by now sobbing bitterly, and her hand shook so much that at first she was unable to write. How very differently must her pen have flowed, Genji mused, when she sat down to answer the letter he had found under her cushion! But now, even when her hand ceased to tremble, she was quite unable to frame her sentences, and he was obliged to dictate the whole letter.

The celebration of Suzaku's fiftieth birthday, again and again deferred, had now been fixed for the middle of the twelfth month. Arrangements for the dancing and music were already in active progress at the New Palace, and Murasaki, who had meant to put off her return some time longer, suddenly took it into her head that all this bustle would help to distract her from her sufferings. She was accordingly moved into her old apartments without further delay. The Akashi Princess was also in residence at the New Palace, with her little boy, Niou, and her second child, also a boy. They were both delightful children, and it was a great pleasure to have them in the house. Genji, who had not taken at first very kindly to the idea of being a grandfather, now played with them for hours on end.

Kashiwagi was of course invited to the rehearsal. He knew that if he stayed at home on such an occasion he would feel extremely bored and miserable; moreover his absence would be remarked upon by every one and might arouse unwelcome suspicions. But when the invitation arrived he wrote that he was too ill to come Genji was certain

that only a very serious and definite illness would have kept him away upon such an occasion, and wrote again, begging him to accept. His father Tō no Chūjō pointed out that Genji would certainly be offended. 'Every one knows that there is nothing serious the matter with you,' he said, 'and on musical occasions of this kind your help is very much needed.' Finally Kashiwagi promised to go. He arrived before the other princes and courtiers who were expected, and was at once admitted behind Genji's screens-of-state. He did indeed not look at all well. He was thin, pale, utterly lacking in the buoyancy and high spirits that were the common possession of his family. He wore a thoughtful, serious air, like one who is over-conscious of his responsibilities. Just the kind of person, thought Genji, whom one would hit upon to put in charge of a flighty young princess. Probably they were very well suited to one another, and if only such an arrangement had been thought of before. . . . Indeed it was not so much what had happened, as the way in which it had taken place, that he would never be able to forgive. If only either of them had behaved with the slightest consideration. . . .

But he spoke to Kashiwagi without a trace of coldness or disapproval. 'What a long time it is since we last met!' he said. 'And there has really been no particular reason. I have, of course, a great deal of illness in the home. Things are better; but the arrangements connected with Suzaku's birthday have kept me very busy, and I have also been obliged to have services read on behalf of his daughter, who, as you know, is now living here with me. Suzaku has taken his vows, and it would be unseemly to celebrate his birthday with the same festivities that we should use were he a layman. But it so happens that there are at present in my house a number of young boys, and I know that it would give Suzaku great pleasure if I trained them to do

a few dances in his honour on the day of the celebration. There is no one who can be so useful to me in this matter as yourself, and I am very grateful to you for having forgiven my long neglect and thus hurried to assist me.' While these words were being spoken Kashiwagi felt his colour continually come and go. It was some time before he could master his feelings sufficiently to reply. At last he said : ' I was very sorry to hear of all your troubles. Since the spring I myself have been very unwell. I think it is really an attack of beri-beri. I have often been almost unable to walk. It is months since I got even so far as the Palace, and I feel as though I had been utterly shut off from the world. No one owes more to Suzaku than I do ; but I am afraid that, had not my father reminded me, I should have entirely forgotten about his fiftieth birthday. If you will forgive my suggesting it, I do not think that a very elaborate ceremony would be at all to Suzaku's taste. When the deputation visits him, a few unambitious songs and dances, with plenty of time afterwards for quiet conversation with his guests—that, I think, is what would give him most pleasure.' ' I entirely agree with you,' answered Genji. ' Of course, we must not cut things down so much as to seem disrespectful ; but if you are in charge I shall have no anxiety on that score. Yūgiri is now thoroughly competent as regards public ceremonies and the like ; but he has never understood much about art. Suzaku is so good a critic in all such matters, particularly as regards music and dancing, that what little we do must at all costs be done properly. That is why I want you to help Yūgiri in arranging the little boys' dances. The professional dancing-masters are hopeless. Each of them has his own set of tricks, and nothing can persuade him to vary them.'

It would have been impossible for anyone to speak more

kindly than Genji had just spoken ; but Kashiwagi, though fully sensible of this fact, still felt as uncomfortable as when he first entered the room. Once this business about the rehearsal had been settled, there seemed nothing else to talk about, and after a few unsuccessful attempts to begin their usual sort of conversation, Kashiwagi quietly withdrew.

The rehearsal took place in the Music Room that opened out of the Fishing Pavilion, the dancers appearing at the foot of a high mound. There was a thin sprinkling of snow upon the ground ; but the air had in it a softness which suggested that Spring was camping somewhere close at hand, and already the orchards were whitening with the first faint tinge of bloom.

As the day wore on, the scene grew somewhat riotous. Every one drank heavily, and the older men, at the sight of their grandchildren's performance (which was indeed a very pretty one, the dancers all being of minute size), tended to become rather maudlin. 'All right, Kashiwagi ; don't look so contemptuous!' Genji shouted across to him. 'Just wait a few years, and you'll find a little wine will make your tears flow quite as fast as ours!' Kashiwagi made no reply, and Genji, looking at him more attentively, saw that he was not only (alone among the whole company) entirely sober, but also extremely depressed. Surely, thought Kashiwagi, every one can see that I am far too ill to take part in such a scene as this. How inconsiderate of Genji (who was certainly not nearly so drunk as he pretended) to call attention to him by shouting across the room in that way! No doubt it was meant as a joke ; but Kashiwagi found it quite impossible to be amused. He had a violent headache, and each time the flagon came round he merely pretended to drink out of it. Genji presently noticed this, and sending it back, pressed him again and again to take his share.

At last he could endure the banquet no longer, and though the proceedings showed no signs whatever of coming to a close, he dragged himself to his feet and left the room. He had such difficulty in walking that he at first imagined he must have drunk far more than he intended. But this explanation would not hold, for he could clearly recollect all that had happened, and was quite certain that he had not taken enough to cause any such effect as this. He definitely connected his present sensations with the strain of appearing in Genji's presence. But embarrassing though the ordeal had been, it would scarcely account for the fact that he was in his present state of complete collapse.

It soon became apparent that his was no mere migraine or surfeit, but the beginning of a desperate malady. His mother proposed to remove him to his father's house, where she thought he could be better looked after. Kashiwagi knew that such a step would be extremely painful to his wife Princess Ochiba, who had for months past endured his complete neglect of her with exemplary patience, always hoping that he would in the end recover from his present disastrous infatuation. The assumption that now, at the onset of a serious illness, she was not the proper person to take charge of him, would seem (as Kashiwagi was well aware) to mark the end of their brief and unhappy relationship. Ochiba's mother was also present. 'They ought never to have suggested such a thing,' she said indignantly. 'Under no possible circumstances have the parents any right to separate a man from his wife. Even if Kashiwagi only stays there till he recovers, the separation will be a most painful one for my daughter. She is perfectly capable of looking after him, and I can see no reason why he should not remain here, at any rate until it is proved that he is not making sufficient progress.' Kashiwagi heard all this, and he felt that she was right. 'I knew from the first,'

he said to Ochiba's mother, 'that as regards birth I was hopelessly inferior to the Princess. But I hoped as time went on to climb high enough in the Government to compensate for this inequality. However, since this terrible illness came upon me I have lost all hope of justifying myself in that way, and all I care about now is that she should not feel I have been altogether unkind to her. Shall I have time ever to do so much as that? Who knows? In any case, I have no desire to move. . . .' The upshot was that for the present he stayed in his own house. But his mother could not believe he was being properly looked after. 'I am very sad about Kashiwagi,' she said. 'He does not any longer care to have me with him. In old days, if he was the least bit unwell or out of spirits, I would always leave my other children and come to look after him. And he liked me to be there; I know he did. . . .' She went to her son's house and made another attempt to bring him away. This time he relented. It was quite true that his mother had been fonder of him than of the rest. Perhaps it was only because he was her first child. But be that as it may, her devotion to him both in the past and since his marriage had been such that he felt it would be cruel to the point of wickedness not to let her take him to a place where she could during those last days be always at his side. He said to Ochiba: 'Do not worry about me. As soon as I am any worse I will let you know, and you can come round quietly to my father's house. Forgive me for having treated you as I have done. I cannot understand now how I came to behave so foolishly. If only I had known that I had so short a time ahead of me. . . .' Weeping bitterly, he was carried to his father's house; Ochiba remained behind, in a state of unspeakable agitation and suspense. The arrival of Kashiwagi in this condition was a great shock to his father Tō no Chūjō. But he reflected

that the illness was not so sudden as people were making out. He had noticed for months that the boy was hardly eating anything, often taking no more than a paltry orange, and sometimes refusing even that. Under such circumstances he could not fail to lose his strength.

The sudden collapse of so well-known and talented a figure provoked in all quarters the liveliest regret. Every one at Court came to enquire after his progress ; the Emperor and Suzaku both sent frequent messengers, while the grief of his parents need not be described. Genji too was very much upset, sent constant messages of enquiry, and wrote several letters of encouragement and sympathy to Tō no Chūjō. Above all, Yūgiri, who had been his closest friend, was in great distress, and now spent most of his time at Kashiwagi's bedside.

The celebration of Suzaku's birthday was fixed for the twenty-fifth of the twelth month. The serious illness of so prominent a person, casting a gloom not only over his own family, but also over so great a part of the higher circles at Court, made the time chosen a singularly unfortunate one. But the affair had for so long been postponed from month to month, that to defer it on account of an illness that might go on indefinitely was out of the question. Moreover, Nyosan, who had already spent much time in planning the arrangements, would (he thought) be grievously disappointed. The ceremony accordingly took place on the appointed day ; prayers were said in the usual Fifty temples, and in Suzaku's own retreat the Scripture of the Great Sun Buddha [1] was solemnly recited.

[1] In Sanskrit, Mahā-vairocana ; in Japanese, Dainichi. The chief Buddha of the Mystical (Tantric) Sect.

CHAPTER VIII

KASHIWAGI

THE New Year brought with it no change in Kashiwagi's condition. A fatal issue seemed certain, and on his own account he had not the slightest wish to avoid it. If indeed from time to time he seemed to be struggling against his fate, it was because he dared not reveal to his parents how little he dreaded a separation, the prospect of which manifestly caused them so bitter an affliction.

From his early childhood the one thing that he had never been able to endure was the feeling of inferiority. In small things and great it had always been the same : if he could not gain the prize, win the game, receive the highest appointment, he at once conceived the profoundest contempt for himself and felt his whole life to be utterly useless. And now, when things had indeed gone far more wrong with him than ever before, this feeling of self-contempt was so overwhelming that all thought of his earthly existence became intolerable to him. He would have been happiest had it been possible to end his days in some country temple ; but he knew only too well that his parents' distress at such a step would be continually present in his mind, and utterly destroy the peace which such a place would otherwise afford. Supposing he did after all recover from this illness ? Worse than the general scandal and discredit, worse than the spectacle of Nyosan's misery and disgrace, would be the knowledge that Genji no longer respected him. They had been friends for so long, were bound together by so many ties of common recollection and experience ; and only

in this one matter had he ever betrayed this friendship. He knew that when he was dead, nay, so soon as it was apparent that he was dying, his final act of treachery would be forgotten, and the long years of their intimacy be cherished and remembered. So sure was he of this that it made the prospect of death doubly welcome to him.

One day, being left alone for a little while, he wrote a letter to Nyosan, in which he said: 'I imagine you heard that I had fallen dangerously ill. You have, since then, shown no sign of wanting to know what has become of me. Perhaps that is quite natural under the circumstances, but it makes me sad to feel. . . .' His hand trembled so much that he could not write all he meant to, and closed suddenly with the poem: 'Even amid the smoke that hangs above my smouldering pyre shall burst into new brightness the unquenchable glitter of my love.' 'Give me one kind word,' he added, 'to light my steps through the darkness that my own folly has cast about the path where I must walk.' This he sent by the hand of Kojijū, along with many last messages and injunctions. The servant-girl, though she was well enough used to being employed on these errands (for the affair had begun when she was a mere child), had since Kashiwagi's abuse of her good offices been in a state of violent indignation against him. But now, hearing such phrases as 'for the last time' and 'never again,' she at once lapsed into tears, and when she delivered the letter, besought Nyosan to answer it while there was still time. 'I am sorry that he is ill,' said Nyosan; 'but I am far too wretched now all day long to feel very differently because this thing or that has gone wrong. Kashiwagi has made enough mischief already, and I am not going to make more by being caught in correspondence with him.' Such resolutions on her part were never the result of firmness, but rather of fear that Genji, who had still only referred

in vague terms to her escapade, might again find it necessary to speak to her upon this shameful subject—a prospect that filled her with the utmost misery and dismay. But Kojijū began quietly preparing the Princess's writing things, and presently, with many hesitations, she produced an answer, which Kojijū under cover of night managed to convey secretly to Tō no Chūjō's house.

The quiet of Kashiwagi's apartments now began to be rudely disturbed ; for Tō no Chūjō, still desperately clinging to the hope that his son's life could be saved, was continually bringing to the bedside some new miracle-worker or healer. Ascetics from mount Katsuragi, famous clerics from the great temples and priests from obscure village shrines, holy men of every rank and description filled the house. Among the magic-workers whom, at their father's bidding, Kōbai [1] and the rest brought back from the hills, were some Yamabushi [2] of the most repulsive and ferocious aspect ; nor were the priests from nearer at hand much less uncouth in appearance, as with wildly rolling eye and harsh voice they intoned their Sanskrit spells. The soothsayers and diviners were for the most part agreed that the evil influence at work upon the sick man was of a feminine kind. But they did not succeed in detecting any actual 'possession,' and it was in the hope of finding some one who could dislodge this mysterious influence that Tō no Chūjō had collected this motley crowd of clerics and healers. 'How I hate this noise!' cried Kashiwagi at last. 'It may be because of my sins—I do not know—but so far from giving me any comfort this jangle of holy words dismays me, and I feel I should live longer were it utterly to cease.' So saying, he dragged himself into the inner room. His real object was to meet Kojijū, but to Tō no Chūjō it was given out that Kashiwagi was asleep. Chūjō was no longer young ;

[1] Younger brother of Kashiwagi. [2] Mountain ascetics.

but he was still for the most part very lively and amusing in his conversation. To see him now solemnly and endlessly discussing Kashiwagi's symptoms with these grim practicants was a strange and saddening spectacle. Listening from the inner-room Kashiwagi overheard him saying: 'I am convinced there is a definite "possession," and I implore you not to rest till you have detected it.' 'What is that he is saying?' said Kashiwagi to Kojijū. 'I suppose the soothsayers have discovered that it is a female influence; for I am sure my father still knows nothing of the real story. Well, if indeed her spirit clings to mine I am proud to die from such a cause. But as for my offence itself, we make too much of it. Such things have happened often enough in the past, and will happen again. What makes me glad to die is not remorse for my guilt, but a strange terror that comes over me when I think that Prince Genji knows my secret. In some way it is his glamour, his dazzling ascendancy that, after what has happened, make life impossible for me. From the moment I met his gaze on the night of the music-practice some sudden cleavage took place in my soul, and its brighter element floated away from me, far off, perhaps to her side, leaving only the dull dross behind. Kojijū, should you find a soul at large in the New Palace, bind it fast to your girdle and bring it back to me.' He was now very weak, and said this half laughing, half crying. Kojijū then told him Nyosan had received his message. Her shame, her contrition, her downcast gaze and sunken cheeks—all appeared so vividly before him that he did indeed feel as though, at the mere mention of her name, his soul was torn from him and drawn irresistibly to her side. 'So soon as I have heard that she has passed safely through her present danger,' Kashiwagi continued, 'I shall be ready to depart. You remember that dream I had—of a cat following me into the room?

I never consulted any one about it, but in my heart of hearts I always knew what it foretold.' The intensity of his passion, which seemed, while he lay here inactive, continually to gather fresh depth and concentration, struck Kojijū usually as something morbid and terrifying. But now she could not withhold her sympathy and began weeping bitterly. Kashiwagi now sent her to fetch a paper candle and by its light examined Nyosan's reply. Her hand was still unformed, but was beginning to have certain good points in it. 'Do not suppose,' she wrote, 'that I have all this while been indifferent to your sufferings. But was it easy for me to express my sympathy? Put yourself for a moment into my position. As for your poem, "May the smoke of my ashes mingle with the flame of your pyre, for to evade the torment of condemning thoughts my need is as great as yours."' Never had she addressed him in such a tone; this at least was something to carry into the other world. His reply looked much as though birds with wet feet had walked over the paper; for he wrote it lying on his back, and the ill-guided pen strayed weakly in every direction. 'Though nought of me remains save smoke drawn out across the windless sky, yet shall I drift to thee unerringly amid the trackless fields of space.'

That evening Nyosan was much indisposed, and the more experienced among her gentlewomen at once recognized that her delivery was at hand. They sent hastily for Genji, who, as he made his way to the New Palace, could not help reflecting how happy and excited this news would have made him, if only the child had indisputably been his. As it was, he must show not only the elation but all the solicitude of an expectant father. Services of intercession must be ordered, priests and miracle-workers summoned to the palace, spells and incantations set at work. Her travail lasted all night. At the first ray of morning sunlight a child was born. It

was hard indeed for Genji to receive this news, and to be told too that the child was a boy, with all the paternal pride and thankfulness that the occasion (if he were not to betray his secret) so urgently demanded. As things were, he was certainly glad that it was a boy ; for with a girl's upbringing he would have been expected to take much more trouble, whereas a boy can be left to his own devices. But should the child, when it grew up, show a striking resemblance to Kashiwagi, this would be far more likely to attract notice in a boy than in a girl. With how strange an appropriateness he had been punished for the crime [1] that never ceased to haunt his conscience ! The only consolation was that sins for which we are punished in this world are said to weigh less heavily against us in the life to come. In point of fact he did for the child all that those who believed it to be his own could possibly expect of him. The Birth Room was fitted out with the utmost prodigality and splendour, and the usual trays, magic boxes [2] and cake-stands poured in from every side, the donors vying with one another in the elegance and ingenuity of the designs with which these customary gifts were adorned. On the night of the fifth day there arrived from the ex-Empress Akikonomu a present of delicacies for the young mother, and gifts for each of her ladies chosen according to their rank and standing, the presentation of which was carried out in the most formal and imposing manner. On the seventh night the Emperor's presents arrived and were delivered by his State messengers with all the solemnity of a public occasion. Tō no Chūjō was anxious to show his good will towards Genji upon what appeared to be so auspicious an occasion ; but owing to Kashiwagi's alarming condition he was unable to appear in person. However,

[1] His relations with his father's mistress, Fujitsubo.
[2] Sets of boxes fitting one into the other.

the callers included almost every other figure of importance whether at the Palace or in the Government. It may be imagined, however, that all these ceremonies, in which to outward appearances Genji was intimately concerned, gave him in reality nothing but awkwardness and discomfort. There was even talk of a grand feast and concert; but with these he managed to dispense.

Nyosan was completely shattered by the ordeal through which she had just passed, the alarming experience of a first childbirth having come upon her at a time when she was already in a very enfeebled and morbid condition. She would not take even so much as a cup of broth; the presence of the child only served to remind her of her disaster, and she heartily wished that she might never recover. Genji did what he could to give those about him the impression that he took an interest in the child; but days passed without his ever asking to see it, and this one fact was enough to set the older nurses gossiping: 'You'd think he would show more feeling than that,' they said. 'Such a lovely child as Madam has given him, and he never chooses so much as to set eyes on it!' These remarks were overheard by Nyosan. This, she felt, was only a foretaste of the attitude that he was about to take up towards herself and the child. Under such circumstances life at the Palace would not, she well knew, be endurable; and she determined so soon as she was strong enough to enter a nunnery.

He did not spend the night in her apartments, but every morning he looked in to see how she was getting on. 'I am sorry I have spent so little time with you,' he said. 'The truth is, I have lately been much absorbed in various penances and devotions. I feel that I have not much time left in which to make ready for the life to come—and in any case there was no use in visiting you when all the ceremonies, with their attendant bustle and disturbance

were going on in your part of the house. But I am very anxious to know how you are. Do you feel quite strong again ? ' So saying he bent over her couch and gazed at her. Raising her head, Nyosan replied, not in the childish voice that he knew, but in a strangely sobered and disillusioned tone : ' I do not think I should have lived through it, had I not known that to die in such a way [1] is reckoned shameful in the world to come. I am going to enter a nunnery and see whether I cannot live on there long enough to lighten the burden of my sins.' ' Do not say such things,' he answered. ' That the experience through which you have just passed should have tried you severely is natural enough ; but surely it was not so terrible as to deprive you of all wish to live ? ' Did she really mean what she had said ? He was appalled at the idea of her carrying out such a resolution. And yet he knew well enough all the difficulties that would arise if they attempted to go on living as though nothing had happened. He knew his own feelings, knew that no effort of his own could alter them, and that, try as he might to forget the past, Nyosan would suffer at every instant from the knowledge that in his heart of hearts he had not forgiven her. And other people, her father for example, would inevitably notice the change in their relations. If, on the other hand, she insisted upon taking her vows, it would be far better that she should do so at once, making her ill-health the pretext. Otherwise the step would certainly be attributed to his unkindness. But then his eye fell upon her long, lovely hair, that should by rights have delighted his eyes for so many years longer ; and the idea of its being shorn from her by the cleric's knife was intolerable to him. ' Come, come,' he said ; ' you must pluck up your courage. Things are not so bad

[1] Those who die in childbirth are much handicapped in spiritual progress beyond the grave.

as that. Look at Murasaki, she was much worse than you have been ; but now she is quite out of danger.' He persuaded her to drink a little of her soup. She was certainly very thin and pale, indeed in every way alarmingly fragile. But nevertheless, as he looked at her lying motionless on the bed, he thought her singularly beautiful, and at that moment all thought of her unfaithfulness vanished from his mind. To such beauty all things could be forgiven.

The ex-Emperor Suzaku was much perturbed by the accounts of Nyosan's slow recovery. She on her side had, since her extreme physical weakness set in, felt the need of his support far more than she had ever done during the early years of their separation, and her women constantly heard her moaning to herself, ' If only my father were here ! I cannot bear to die without seeing him once again.' A messenger was sent to Suzaku's mountain temple, it being thought right he should know that she was continually asking for him. Immediately upon this the ex-Emperor did what he had thought never in his life to do again—he left the precincts of the temple, and under cover of night made his way to the New Palace. Genji was quite unprepared for this sudden arrival, but hastened to thank the august visitor for the singular honour he had conferred upon them by his coming. ' Well,' said Suzaku, ' a few weeks ago no one would have been more surprised than myself if it had been suggested that I should ever appear in your midst again. But I have lately been so much perturbed by the accounts of Nyosan's health that I find it impossible to go on with my ordinary round of prayers and devotions. The thought that she, a mere child, may go first, and I, old and enfeebled, be left behind without even the consolation of having seen her these many months past, is so terrible to me, that though I well know my

sudden reappearance may easily give great offence,[1] it was without a moment's hesitation that I thus hastened to her side.' Even in his monastic garb Suzaku was still a graceful and attractive figure; and though, to escape attention, he had dressed in the simple black robes of a common priest, his bearing gave to them a certain dignity and grace of line that made the sight of his altered guise less saddening than is usually the case. Genji's eyes indeed filled with tears when Suzaku first entered the room; but they were tears of envy rather than sorrow. 'I do not think there is much the matter with her,' he said. 'Considering how little proper nourishment she has taken in the last few weeks it would be strange if she were not feeling out of sorts. But if you do not mind putting up with a rather uncomfortable seat. . . .' So saying, he led the ex-Emperor to her bed and motioned him to a low divan that had been pushed alongside of it. With the help of her people she shifted a little towards the near side of the bed. He raised the bed-curtain and said gently: 'I am afraid I look very much like the household chaplain arriving to read the evening incantations. But it does not seem that I shall ever make much of a name for myself in that line, for all my prayers on your behalf appear to be singularly unsuccessful. If I have come, it was not in the belief I could be of any use to you, but merely because I could not endure to stay away.' 'If you had not come,' she answered amid her tears, 'I do not think I should have lived for many hours. But now that you are here, let me take my vows before it is too late.' 'This is a very serious matter,' he answered. 'Of course, if you have considered it properly and are certain that you would not repent of such a step, I should be the last person in the world to oppose it. But you are very young. Should you survive this illness, you

[1] Suggest that he was meditating a *coup d'état.*

have in all probability a long while yet to live. Your renouncement of the world at such an age would cause great astonishment, and hard things would inevitably be said of those on whom your happiness here is supposed to depend. I hope you have reflected upon these points. . . .' Then turning to Genji : ' I think we ought to consider whether such a step would not in any case be a great help to her. Even if, as she fears, she has only a very short time to live, her wishes in such a matter ought to be respected.' ' She has been saying this for days past,' said Genji. ' But I had the impression that the evil influence which has possessed her was causing her to speak thus in order that we might be deceived, and I paid no attention.' ' Doubtless,' answered Suzaku, ' when spirits suggest evil courses to us it is better not to obey them. But when some one who is obviously in the last stages of weakness and exhaustion asks us to take a certain step, we are likely afterwards to suffer from great remorse if we pay no attention to the request.' This then, thought Suzaku to himself, was Genji's attitude towards the loved being whose happiness he had so confidently entrusted to his keeping. It was evident, from the way in which Genji spoke, that Nyosan's wishes had long ceased to have any importance to him. Indeed, the tone of what he had just heard fitted in only too well with rumours that had been reaching him for years past. Well, if Genji's treatment of her was such that she preferred the rigours of the cloister, much scandal would certainly be avoided were she to take her vows now, when her illness offered a reasonable excuse. However unsatisfactory Genji might have proved as a husband, he had certainly provided very handsomely for her in material ways. This fact would under ordinary circumstances have made it difficult to remove her from his control. But if she took orders Suzaku could establish her very comfortably in that

roomy pleasant palace in the Third Ward, which his father, the old Emperor, had once presented to him. While he was alive, he could keep an eye upon her himself ; and Genji, whatever might be his other preoccupations, would surely not be so unfeeling as wholly to abandon her. But as to that, events would show.

On finding that Suzaku was not averse to Nyosan's project, Genji (with now no thought in his head of the wrong that she had done him) rushed to her bedside, beseeching her at least to wait until she was stronger. 'At present and for a long while to come you would be far too weak to perform the offices of a nun. Eat, drink, recover your strength, and then will be time to talk more about this.' But she shook her head, hating the hypocrisy (as it seemed to her) that forced him to act thus in Suzaku's presence. He saw at once that she thought his forgiveness only a pretence ; but how was he to convince her ? It was now nearing dawn, and as Suzaku wished to be back in his monastery before daylight, it was necessary to act at once. Choosing from among the priests who were on night-duty in her apartments those who seemed to him most suitable for the task, he brought them to her, bade them administer the vows and shave her head. To see those long and lovely tresses cast aside, to hear her recite the dismal vows, was more than Genji could bear, and he wept bitterly during the whole of the ceremony. Nor could Suzaku stand by unmoved while the child for whom he had desired every worldly blessing, upon whom he had lavished a hundred times more care than upon any of the rest, made that renouncement of which none would dream who hoped for further happiness in this earthly life. 'You can say the prayers when you are stronger,' he said hastily and drove away. For it was growing rapidly lighter. Nyosan was now so weak as to be but half conscious of what was going

on, and she did not bid him farewell or, apparently, even notice his departure.

During the course of the early morning rituals a 'possession' declared itself, and presently, in tones of laughing malice, a voice was heard to say: 'Ha, ha! you thought you were done with me. No such thing. When number one turned me off, I took service with my lady here, and, unsuspected of you all, have been giving her my very best attention ever since. Now I shall go back. . . .'

The news that Nyosan had taken her vows was the final blow to Kashiwagi's last flickering desire of recovery. He thought often of Ochiba, and wished that he could have had her with him. But his parents had now taken such complete possession of him that he feared she would feel her position more acutely here than at home, and instead he made the hopeless suggestion that he should be moved for a while back into his own house. To this they naturally refused consent. He discussed Ochiba's future with various people. Her mother had always been strongly opposed to the match, and had only yielded to the insistence of Tō no Chūjō, and also of Suzaku himself, who thought that he had found in Kashiwagi the straightforward, steady-going husband that Nyosan's disaster had taught him to prefer—a man who would be so flattered by the offer of this connection with the Imperial Family that all his energies would be spent in proving himself worthy of the honour! Kashiwagi blushed when he remembered what had been expected of him. 'I hope,' he said to his own mother one day, 'you will do what you can for Ochiba when I am gone. I know it is wretched for her to be left like this, and though it is not my fault that our life together has lasted for so short a time, she will have the feeling that she has got very little out of this alliance.' 'It's no good your asking such things

of me,' said his mother. 'I shall be in my grave almost as soon as you.' It was evident that she did not mean to be of any use, and he turned to his brother Kōbai, to whom he gave a number of detailed instructions about this and his affairs in general. Kashiwagi had always been regarded in the family as a model of solidity and good sense. His brothers and other young men of the household had looked upon him as a kind of general parent and protector, so that the prospect of his loss was a shattering blow to them all.

The Emperor, too, was greatly distressed, and being told that Kashiwagi was not expected to live much longer, he thought he might safely confer upon him the rank of Counsellor Extraordinary. He hoped that perhaps the excitement of receiving this promotion might act as a spur to Kashiwagi's failing strength, and even bring him back once more on a final visit to the Palace. Kashiwagi was of course delighted; but was obliged to reply that it was impossible for him to receive the investiture in person.

The first visitor who came to congratulate him on this honour was Yūgiri, with whom he had always been on particularly intimate terms. The gate nearest Kashiwagi's apartments was thronged with riders and coaches; but since the turn of the year he had been too weak even to sit up in bed, and was able to receive none of these visitors. But the very fact of his extreme weakness warned him that, if he were ever to see Yūgiri again, it would be as well not to let this opportunity pass, and asking him to forgive the untidy condition of the room, he dismissed the priests and attendants who were at his bedside, that he and Yūgiri might enjoy this final visit undisturbed. 'I hoped to find you a little stronger to-day. I thought that perhaps this promotion . . .' Yūgiri said, pulling aside the bed-curtains. The white bed-clothes and (despite his apologies) the neatness and cleanliness of all his surroundings made Kashiwagi's

abode seem positively enviable in its brightness and peace. Pleasant perfumes had just been burnt in the room, and it was evident that the sick man was determined, though he could do nothing for Yūgiri's entertainment, not to let the visit remain in his memory as a disagreeable experience. Yūgiri bent close down over the pillow, but Kashiwagi was so weak that his voice was scarcely audible, and it seemed as though he had great difficulty in breathing. 'You do not look nearly so bad as I had expected,' said Yūgiri. 'One would never guess you had been laid up for so long.' But as he said these words he was obliged to pause and dry his tears. 'Tell me about this illness of yours,' he went on. 'When did it first begin to be so serious? Though I know you so well, I feel very much in the dark about it all.' After telling him a good deal about the outward course of his illness, Kashiwagi said: 'But it is all connected with something that has been very much on my mind. I ought perhaps to have spoken about this before; but there cannot be any use in doing so now. I have often longed to speak to some one, to my brothers, for example. But whenever I was on the point of talking about it, there seemed some reason why that particular person was out of the question as a confidant on such a subject. It was—how shall I say?—a kind of awkwardness that had arisen between Genji and me. For weeks past I had been meaning to go into it with him, and already the thing had begun to weigh so much upon me that life was becoming quite unendurable, when suddenly he sent for me of his own accord. It was the night of the music-rehearsal. The moment I entered his presence I felt that in his heart he was condemning me, and when I met his eyes there was something in them that robbed me of all courage, of all desire to face my shame; and since that day I have not known an instant's happiness or peace. Of course, Genji must always have regarded me

as in every way far beneath him ; but ever since I was a boy he had always shown the greatest confidence in me. I felt I must have all this out with him ; for if I died with it on my conscience I should be held back from Salvation in the life to come. However, it is too late now. . . . But the greatest kindness you could do me would be to explain matters to him when I am gone. I know quite well that he will at once forgive me then. If you would only consent to do that. . . .' Obscure as this request was, Yūgiri had some notion what it was about. However, he dared not assume that he had guessed correctly, and only replied : 'I think your fears are entirely imaginary. My father invariably speaks of you with the greatest good will, and since your illness he has been very anxious about you, and shown quite clearly again and again how heavy a loss to him your death would be. If there has been any sort of misunderstanding between you, why did you not tell me about it before ? I am sure I could easily have cleared it up for you.' 'Perhaps it would have been better if I had,' he answered. 'But every day I thought that next day I should be stronger and more able to tell about such a thing as this, and so in the end I have left it till too late. Of course, it is essential that not a hint of this business should go any further. I only spoke to you because I was sure you would one day contrive to bring up the subject and do your best to make him see the thing in its true light.

'And there is something else. Do what you can for Ochiba. I do not want Suzaku to think that I have left her with no one to keep an eye upon her.' There was much more that he eagerly desired to say. But his voice had quite given out, and when he was finally furnished with paper and a brush, all he had strength to write was : 'Please go away ! '

Once more the miracle-workers crowded round the bed,

his parents were hastily summoned, as also his sisters, Lady Chūjō and Yūgiri's wife, Kumoi. Tamakatsura too, who did not forget that Kashiwagi had been her suitor before he became her brother, was extremely upset by the news of his condition, and had many services on his behalf read in her favourite temples. Yet all was to no purpose, for he now expired in the presence of his family ; but so suddenly that there was no time to fetch Lady Ochiba from the house in the First Ward. Though he had never really given her his affection, he had always treated her with the greatest possible consideration and outward kindness, and she had no feeling of grievance against him. She was only sad at being left a widow at so early an age, after having been married to a husband who seemed, as she thought when looking back upon it, to have taken no pleasure in life at all.

Nyosan, who since his unhappy exploit had often thought that death would not be too bad a punishment for him, was aghast to hear of his end. She remembered how he had predicted the birth of her child. Perhaps he had not come that day intending to do any harm. Some meetings (her religion taught her) are ordained by Fate.[1] Had she after all judged his transgression too harshly ?

Yūgiri thought again and again of Kashiwagi's mysterious request. That the trouble to which he had alluded was in some way connected with Princess Nyosan he could not doubt. To begin with, Kashiwagi had repeatedly betrayed by signs of one sort or another the fact that he took a particular interest in her. This in the case of Kashiwagi, usually so reticent, so perfectly in command of himself, meant that some tremendous force was at work within, and it was not difficult to imagine that such a passion might have broken out in some painful scene or indiscreet declaration. Indeed, it was almost certain that a definite scandal had occurred ;

[1] Karma.

if not, why had Genji permitted the Princess to take her vows at such a ridiculously early age, and upon the pretext of an illness that appeared to be of very little consequence ?

He did not mention the matter to any one, not even to Kumoi, who shared all his secrets. But he was determined, next time an opportunity occurred, simply to repeat to Genji what Kashiwagi had said, and see whether Genji could make sense of it all, or no. Meanwhile there was another visit he must pay. For Ochiba, alone with her mother in that vast, empty palace, the days passed in cheerless fashion enough. Occasionally one of her brothers-in-law would look in ; but apart from this she had no company and no distractions. From time to time she would catch sight of his favourite hawk or horse, or merely of some falconer or groom moping disconsolately about, and note how man and beast alike wore the same cast-off, ownerless air, and a like impression of gloom was created by the sight of his other possessions—his lute and zithern above all, which looked so forlorn with their strings detached.[1] Over the trees in front of the house there hung already a thick haze of blossom. These things, she thought, as she gazed out of the window, went on just as before ; and amid her women who crept to and fro in their dark mourning dress she was feeling very lonely, when suddenly there was a sound of shouting and a great ringing of hoofs in the road outside. She expected the sounds to pass by and fade away into the distance. But to her surprise the cavalcade drew up at her own door. For a moment she forgot everything, and thought this was Kashiwagi driving back from the Palace. A note was brought in. It must of course be Kōbai or one of his brothers. Who else indeed ever came near her ? It caused her some perturbation to discover that the visitor was no less a person than Yūgiri.

[1] In sign of mourning.

She was on the point of sending her women to make him welcome, when she reflected that this was not the sort of treatment to which he was probably used, and in the end her mother ushered him into the side-room of the great hall. He expressed his sorrow at her daughter's bereavement and told her how, shortly before his death, Kashiwagi had committed Princess Ochiba to his care. 'I hope before very long to have an opportunity of showing you that I take this duty very seriously indeed. I should have come to talk the matter over with you before, had not this last month been crowded with Court functions which etiquette obliged me to attend. You can imagine that, as far as my own inclinations were concerned, I have not been feeling at all in the mood for such junketings, and would far rather have remained quietly at home. I can judge something of what poor Ochiba's feelings must be by what I have seen and heard at Tō no Chūjō's house. The loss is after all a far heavier one for her than for his parents.' Ochiba's mother had at first been rather shy of this unwonted visitor; but his tone was friendly and reassuring. 'Poor thing!' she said. 'We older people do our best to keep up her courage. After all, she is not the only young widow in the land. She must try to remember that. I have lived long enough myself to know that loss and sorrow are what we must expect as our portion in this life. If happiness comes in, it is only by the way. And I do indeed wish she would try to be more cheerful. If she goes on like this she will soon follow him to the grave. You, I know, were Kashiwagi's great friend; but I must tell you that I was opposed to this match from the start. I don't know why Suzaku was so pleased about it. I suppose he wanted to do Tō no Chūjō a good turn. But it now seems that, though the reasons I gave may have been very bad ones, I was perfectly right in my objection, and I only wish I had not let them

talk me down. Not that I foresaw what would happen. I was merely old-fashioned enough to disapprove in any case of a marriage outside the Imperial Family. It turned out, however, to be something even worse than such an alliance. For her life with Kashiwagi was such that you could call her neither wife nor maid. That she should now pine to death at the loss of such a husband may be very good for his reputation in the world outside; but as her mother I cannot be expected to applaud the sacrifice.'

It was growing late, and as he was due at Tō no Chūjō's house he was obliged to retire. Ochiba did not put in an appearance. But this was by no means his last visit to the palace in the First Ward.

It was the fourth month, and the same level shade of green lay upon every thicket and wood. The grief-stricken palace and those in it who had been committed to his charge recurred constantly to Yūgiri's thoughts during these enjoyable summer days. One afternoon, finding the time hang heavy on his hands, he set out earlier than usual upon his visit to the First Ward. He noticed that a film of grass was already spreading across the courtyards, and here and there where the sand had worn thin or in sheltered crannies along the walls, clumps of motherwort had already squeezed themselves a place. Ochiba's seat was to-day for the first time surrounded by thin, summer curtains-of-state, which, as the wind and light of the early afternoon filtered through them, looked delightfully fresh and cool. He was met by a little girl, whose exquisitely poised head pleased him, though she, like every one else in the house, wore garments that by their drab colour told the same sad tale. While he waited to learn whether Ochiba could receive him (her mother was unwell and was said to be lying down) he was looking at the copses in front of the house and thinking that they at least knew nothing of what had befallen its

inmates and did not scruple to flaunt their gay summer tints, when he noticed an oak and a maple, both conspicuous for the brightness of their fresh foliage, standing side by side, their branches intertwined. 'I wonder how they became such friends?' he said to one of Ochiba's ladies, and approaching the curtains-of-state, he recited the verse: 'What to the oak you gave, now to its trusted friend the maple-tree, ungracious Goddess of the Woods, will you deny?' 'Those soft summer clothes look very well on him,' whispered the ladies-in-waiting, as Yūgiri bent over the curtains. 'What elegance! What grace!' A maid called Shōshō presently brought the answer: 'Though the oak be fallen, not yet to a chance comer shall I give the small twigs of the roof.' Ochiba's mother now appeared, and Yūgiri hastily moved further away from the curtains. 'All these weeks of sorrow and disturbance have upset my health,' she said, 'and I am very shaky. But really, it is so good of you to keep on coming like this, that I felt I must make an effort to thank you in person.' She did certainly look very unwell. 'I am afraid you are having a very difficult time with Ochiba,' he said. 'It is of course natural that she should be upset; but there is a limit to all things. We must accept what Fate sends, and make the best of it. After all, life is short—our sorrows will soon be over.' But what he was really thinking was that this Ochiba had obviously a great deal more in her than people had led him to suppose. Why was it that she mourned so inconsolably for some one whom she had scarcely known? He was determined to probe the mystery, and asked all manner of questions about her. Perhaps she felt now, more than during his lifetime, that her marriage had rendered her ridiculous in the eyes of society. Poor thing! She was far from being a great beauty. Yet she was not downright ugly, or certainly did not appear to be so from what

he had been allowed to see of her. But even if she were, one ought not to be unkind to a woman merely on account of her plainness, any more than one had a right to take liberties with her merely because she was handsome. 'Please sometimes try to be quite frank with me and confide your difficulties to me as you would have done to Kashiwagi.' There was nothing actually improper in this speech of Yūgiri's, but it was said in so impassioned a tone of voice as to be somewhat embarrassing.

Meanwhile Kashiwagi's loss continued to be severely felt in the country and at Court. He had been unusually popular in every class of society, and among people of all ages and professions. Even the most unlikely kitchenmen and tottering dames at Court continually bemoaned his loss; while the young Emperor, whose constant companion he had been at all concerts, feasts and excursions, felt a bitter pang whenever he thought of the past. And indeed there were few occasions upon which some did not suddenly exclaim: 'O Kashiwagi, poor Kashiwagi!' Only Genji knew that he had not quitted the world without leaving one small keepsake behind him, a fact that would have interested the friends of the deceased, but unfortunately could not be communicated to them.

Nor was this memento of Kashiwagi's career any longer so insignificant a creature. For by the time autumn came round it was already crawling on the floor, and was destined soon to learn other accomplishments.

CHAPTER IX

THE FLUTE

THE first anniversary of Kashiwagi's death had come. Every day Genji felt his loss more keenly. The number of persons with whom he was on easy and informal terms was in any case none too great. But Kashiwagi had been something more than this. They had shared each other's lives and thoughts—at least until the disastrous episode which Genji now did his best to forget. Besides the masses that on his own account he caused to be said in Kashiwagi's memory, he set apart a sum of a hundred golden pieces which he spent on services that in his own heart he regarded as being performed in the name of Kaoru, the dead man's child. But this must of course remain a secret ; for he continued to bring up the boy as though he were his. Yūgiri not only celebrated the anniversary in the most solemn manner, but was upon this sad occasion so prodigal in his attentions to the ladies in the First Ward [1] that Tō no Chūjō could not help remarking it. ' Yūgiri,' he said, ' is taking a far larger share in managing my poor son's affairs than I should ever have expected. Kōbai and the rest are not nearly so active. He must have been far more intimate with Kashiwagi than I supposed.' Yūgiri's zeal and all the other marks of the affection and esteem in which the deceased had been held, served but to make his parents feel more bitterly the pang of his untimely loss.

To Suzaku, had not the affairs of this world been by now of shadowy import to him, the tragic outcome of all his

[1] Kashiwagi's widow (Princess Ochiba) and her mother.

paternal solicitude would indeed have been a shattering blow. Here was Ochiba left stranded, after a short experience of a marriage that had from the first been mere mockery; and Nyosan, his beloved Nyosan, for whom he had hoped such splendid things, dead—at least to all the friendly and human part of life. As it was, however, it gave him considerable pleasure to think that his daily occupations—his own round of prayers, penances and offerings—had now become hers, and he constantly wrote to her upon small matters connected with the religious life. One day he sent her a bamboo sprout taken from a wood near his retreat and some *tokoro* [1] dug up on the neighbouring hillside, and in the margin of his letter, which was a very long one, he wrote: 'I send you these tokens of a hermit's life, none too easy to come by, now that the spring mist lies so thick upon the hills. "Though far behind me you walk upon Salvation's path, go boldly on and let my goal be yours."' [2] She was reading this poem with tears in her eyes, when Genji entered. What were those strange objects reposing in the lacquer bowls which she usually kept filled with fruit? Then he saw that she was reading a letter from Suzaku, which she handed to him. It was very long, contained many reflections upon his own approaching death, and lamenting the impossibility of their ever meeting again. The passage about the *tokoro* came oddly from Suzaku's pen, belonging as it did to pietism rather than to poetry; but Genji read it with a feeling of deep remorse. No doubt Suzaku had suffered great anxiety and disappointment over Nyosan's marriage; and though Genji could not regard this as his own fault, 'I do indeed hope,' he said, 'that you have no intention of taking your father's hint.

[1] A bitter root.

[2] *Tokoro* also means 'place, destination.' 'Seek out the same *Tokoro* as I have done,' i.e. leave the City and take refuge in a mountain retreat.

That you should dream of scaling these mountain fastnesses is a terrible idea.' Now that his relation to her could only be of the slenderest kind, he began to be more than ever struck by her rather childish beauty, the effect of which seemed only to be enhanced by the way her hair was cut at the sides, so that its ends lay flat against her cheeks. It had all been his fault. It was he who had allowed her to drift away from him; and as though in a futile effort to repair the remissness of past years he now came very close to her curtains and spoke to her almost caressingly.

The little boy was asleep in his nurse's quarters; but presently he was waked, and crawling into the room made straight for Genji and grabbed at his sleeve. He was dressed in a little shirt of white floss, over which was a red coat with a Chinese pattern finely worked upon it. The skirts of this garment were remarkably long and trailed behind him in the quaintest way; but it was (as is usual with children of that age) quite open at the front, showing his little limbs, white and smooth as a fresh-stripped willow wand. There was certainly in his smile and the shape of his brow something that recalled Kashiwagi. But where had the child got his remarkably good looks? Not from his father, who was passable in appearance, but could not possibly have been called handsome. To Nyosan, curiously enough, he could see no resemblance. Indeed the expression that chiefly gave character to the boy's face (or so Genji contrived to fancy) was not at all unlike his own.

The child was just beginning to walk. As soon as he entered the room he caught sight of Suzaku's strange-looking roots lying in the fruit-dish, and toddled in that direction. Anxious to discover what sort of things they were, he was soon pulling at them, scattering them over the floor, breaking them in pieces, munching them, and in

general making a terrible mess both of himself and the room. 'Look what mischief he is up to,' said Genji. 'You had better put them somewhere out of sight. I expect one of the maids thought it a good joke to tell him they were meant to eat.' So saying, he took up the child in his arms. 'What an expressive face this boy has!' he continued. 'I have had very little to do with children of this age, and had got it into my head that they were all much alike and all equally uninteresting. I see now how wrong I was. What havoc he will live one day to work upon the hearts of the princesses that are growing up in these neighbouring apartments![1] I am half sorry that I shall not be there to see. But "though Spring comes each year . . ."'[2] 'How can you talk of such a thing?' every one said with horror. Little Kaoru was cutting his teeth, and thinking that one of Suzaku's bamboo-shoots would be just the thing to press against his swollen gums, he managed to grab at them, and dribbling monstrously, thrust one into his mouth. 'Now he's really enjoying himself,' said Genji. 'What depraved tastes children do have! "Though there be that in its stem which is bitter to recall, yet from this bamboo-shoot no more my heart can I withhold."' Reciting this acrostic poem, he took the child by the hand and tried to persuade him to put the thing down. But Kaoru, smiling broadly, took not the slightest notice, and with a great clatter crawled away with his prize as fast as his arms and legs could carry him.

As the weeks went by, the child grew more and more attractive, and before long even the 'touch of bitterness' that its existence had been wont to lend to Genji's thoughts utterly disappeared. He felt that the child, now a source

[1] The little daughter of the Akashi Princess.

[2] 'Though Spring comes back each year and fresh flowers bloom, we shall be there to see them only so long as Fate gives us leave.'

of so much delight to him, was destined to be born in that way and no other. Kashiwagi had but been the instrument of Fate. Among the strange inconsistencies of his apparently enviable lot, none (thought Genji) was more curious than this, that the one lady in his household who was of faultless lineage, young, beautiful, in every way immaculate, should after a short spell of marriage with him declare her preference for the convent! At such moments some of the old bitterness against Kashiwagi would for a while return.

All this time Yūgiri had been turning over in his mind what Kashiwagi had said to him on his death-bed. Had he been entirely ignorant of what it referred to, he would probably have discussed the matter with Genji long ago. But as it was, he knew just enough to feel that the subject was a very embarrassing one, and he wondered whether he should ever have the courage to embark upon it.

One melancholy autumn evening when he went to pay his accustomed visit to the ladies in the First Ward, he found Ochiba busily engaged in playing upon her zithern. She did not wish to be disturbed, and he was shown into the southern or side-room. As he took his seat he heard the swish of retreating skirts and caught a pleasant whiff of scent, those things denoting (as he guessed) that a bevy of ladies had, at the news of his arrival, hastened to take cover in the inner room. The visit began by his usual conversation with Ochiba's mother. While they were talking together of old times he could not help contrasting the utter stillness and desolation of this house with the lively stir and bustle that went on from dawn to dusk in his own palace, teeming as it did with unruly children and their innumerable attendants. There was a dignity, a severity about the place; and looking round him he felt that he who broke in upon this flat tranquillity with so much as a hint of common

passions and desires, who fluttered this decorous stillness by any coarse vehemence or unwarranted familiarity, would be guilty of a breach of taste, for the condemnation of which no word could be strong enough. He was given a zithern, and recognized it to be Kashiwagi's. After playing a few chords he said to Ochiba's mother: 'I know the tone of this instrument; it is the one that Kashiwagi used, is it not? How I wish that your daughter would play something on it. They say that a dead man's touch lingers in the instruments that he played, and can be recognized even after his death.' 'I fear that cannot be so in this case,' the mother replied, 'for after his death the strings were removed, and those are new ones. Ochiba has played very little lately, and is, I am sorry to say, in danger of forgetting all that her father taught her. Suzaku, who, as you know, took a lot of trouble with his daughters' music, often said Ochiba was the one that showed the greatest promise. But since all this trouble came, I fear her playing has gone utterly to pieces. . . .' She begged him to play again; but he refused, saying that if any hand could waken the echoes of Kashiwagi's touch, it would be that of Ochiba; and he insisted upon the zithern being laid near her chair. But she seemed disinclined to comply with his wish, and he did not press her.

The moon was shining out of a cloudless sky; a flight of wild geese passed over the house, wing to wing, in faultless line. How she, companionless, must envy that blissful troop![1] At last, moved by the beauty of the autumn evening, with its sudden stirrings of light wind, cool to the skin, she took up a large Chinese zithern and played a few chords, which by their passionate intensity stirred his feelings far more than mere words could have done. But

[1] The male and female wild goose were supposed to fly wing interlocked with wing.

she showed no inclination to play in concert with him, and as it was now very late, he made ready to depart. Just as he was leaving, the mother handed him a flute. 'This had been in his family for years,' she said; 'but there is no use in its lying idle in this deserted house. He used to play it as he sat in his coach, and its music blended with the cries of his outriders. I long to hear it played so again, even in another's hand. . . .' He saw at once that it was Kashiwagi's familiar flute, and remembered having often heard him express the hope that it would fall into the hands of some one who could make good use of it, and not merely be treated as a keepsake when he was gone. Yūgiri played a few runs upon it and then suddenly stopped. 'You let me play on his zithern,' he said, 'and encouraged by you I felt no compunction. But somehow when it comes to playing on this flute. . . .' He broke off, and Ochiba's mother recited the poem: 'To-night at last has the voice of the cicada sounded as of old in the dewy bushes round my house.' 'Though hole for hole, unaltered are the notes the flute gives forth, what should these fingers conjure from it now, save the choked sound of tears?' So Yūgiri answered, and after many hesitations and delays, at last, far on into the night, went back to his own house.

The shutters were closed and every one was asleep. Kumoi had heard the extraordinary trouble he was taking in arranging the affairs of the two ladies in the First Ward It seemed to involve his coming home very late at night; and though Kumoi distinctly heard him arrive on this occasion, she felt in no mood for conversation, and pretended to be asleep. 'Why have you locked yourselves in like this?' he cried, when he was at last admitted. 'I should have thought that with such a moon as this abroad in the heavens no one would have the heart to shut their windows.' So saying he threw back the shutters, and rolled up the

blinds of her divan, while he himself took a seat at a point from whence he could see the beauties of the night. 'How any one can lie a-bed when there are such sights to be seen, I cannot imagine,' said Yūgiri. 'Do come here and look. I hate your not seeing it!' But she was in a bad temper, and pretended not to hear. The apartments seemed to be littered with children, their little faces blank with the vacancy of infant slumber, and wherever he turned were bevies of dames-in-waiting, nurses and the like—a perfect tangle of sleeping forms. Again he contrasted this crowded scene with the death-like mansion that he had just left. Taking the flute out of his pocket he played a few notes. Were they already asleep in the First Ward, or was Ochiba at any rate thinking of him, wishing he were still in the house? Perhaps she was at this very instant playing upon the zithern that he had placed within her reach. Had she changed the tuning?[1] And her mother too, she was a fine player on the Japanese zithern. So his thoughts rambled on as he lay in bed. Why was it, he asked himself, that Kashiwagi had seemed to take so little interest in Ochiba? Though no one could say he had actually ill-treated her. The idea that if one possessed Ochiba one could ever grow tired of her seemed to him preposterous. Yet he knew that such things did happen, and indeed it was rarely enough that any attachment subsisted unaltered through the years—his own relation to Kumoi was the one example that occurred to him. And the result was that by this exclusive fidelity he had spoilt her. She had grown a trifle touchy and exacting. . . . At this point he fell asleep. He dreamt that Kashiwagi appeared to him, and picking up the flute examined it curiously. It occurred to Yūgiri even in his dream that it had been unwise of him to play on it, for this had certainly drawn Kashiwagi's ghost to his side.

[1] In sign of dislike for him.

'Could I, like the wind among the reed-stems, blow where I would, then into the hands of a true heir should fall the music of this flute.' So the dream-figure recited; and Yūgiri was about to question it concerning the meaning of this strange verse, when he woke with a start. One of his children was crying. The piercing noise went on and on. It would not take its milk, and the nurses were scurrying about, evidently in great concern. Presently Kumoi took the child in her own arms and sat with it near the lamp, her hair thrown back behind her ears and her dress open in front, showing the pretty curves and undulations of her breast. She did not attempt to feed the child, but let it put its lips to her breasts, and by one device and another had soon stopped its tears. Yūgiri was now standing by her side. 'Is there anything amiss with the child?' he asked, and to show his concern began scattering handfuls of rice and reciting spells of protection; an activity which, if it did not greatly help the child, served at least to dispel the impression of his own dream. 'It is no use your doing that,' she said. 'The boy is ill. Probably he caught some infection when you insisted upon opening the window. You come back like this, after amusing yourself I don't know how or where, and flood the house with unwholesome night air, merely that you may have the pleasure of staring at the moon.' But he saw from her face that she was no longer cross, and was now only teasing him. 'I am certainly very much to blame,' he said, 'if it is true that "infections" can only enter through doors and windows. Had any one else suggested this I should have thought it a rather infantile view. But coming from the mother of half a dozen children it must of course be treated with respect.' After that he sat silently watching her in a manner that Kumoi found very disconcerting, and she said at last: 'Had not you better go to bed? I am afraid I am not dressed for show.'

She was conscious that, sitting in the full glare of the lamp, she did not look her best. So far from being irritated by this coquetry, Yūgiri felt touched that she should still care so much what impression she made upon him. The child did indeed seem to be very much indisposed. It continued to cry at intervals all through the night, and no one in the house got much sleep.

Yūgiri was worried about this flute. The dream seemed clearly to indicate that it had not reached its right destination. Kashiwagi certainly could not have wanted it to go to a woman. What good could it be to her? And there was no man who seemed to come into question. Recollecting his last interview with Kashiwagi, Yūgiri became more than ever convinced that he had died with some desperate entanglement clinging about his soul, some secret or remorse such as might for ever hold him back from Release; and turning over in his mind what were generally considered the best ways of dealing with such a case, he arranged for all manner of services to be said on behalf of Kashiwagi's soul at Otagi [1] and at the various temples with which the dead man's family had been connected. He thought of dealing with the flute by offering it as present to some Buddhist shrine; but on reflection he saw that this would be less than civil to the lady who had just given it to him, and he determined to consult his father upon the subject. Genji, he was told, was with the Akashi Princess. As he was passing through Murasaki's apartments Yūgiri was greeted by little Niou, now three years old. He was Murasaki's great favourite, and perhaps the prettiest of all the children in the palace. 'Will you pick me up, please,' he said, 'and do yourself the honour to carry me back to my mummy?' He still got his words mixed up, and applied to himself the terms of respect that he heard his nurses

[1] Where Kashiwagi had presumably been buried.

use when they spoke of him. 'Come up then,' said Yūgiri, laughing. 'But we shall have to pass in front of Lady Murasaki's screen. Won't she think that very rude?' 'She can't see you now,' said Niou, covering Yūgiri's face with his little sleeve; and thus, guided by the child, Yūgiri arrived blindfold at the Akashi Princess's door. Here Kaoru was playing along with the other Akashi children. Seeing Niou being deposited upon the threshold, his elder brother, Ni no Miya, rushed up to Yūgiri crying: 'Me too, a ride!' But Niou tried to stop Yūgiri from taking the other child in his arms. 'No, no,' he said, 'he's my uncle Yūgiri, not yours. I want him for my own.' 'Behave yourselves, children,' cried Genji, who was standing near by. 'Yūgiri does not belong to either of you. As a matter of fact, he is the Emperor's gentleman, and if His Majesty were to hear that either of you had stolen the Colonel of his Bodyguard, he might be very angry. As for you, Niou, you're a little rascal. You are always trying to get the better of your elder brother!' 'Ni no Miya,' said Yūgiri, 'is already beginning to forgo his rights with quite an elderly resignation. In a child of his age such unselfishness is alarming.' Genji thought he had never seen three such charming children, and despite the hubbub they were creating, smiled indulgently upon them all. At last, however, he said: 'But this is no place to receive a visitor; let us go somewhere where we can talk more comfortably.' So saying he led the way to his own room. But they had hard work to escape, for the three little princes clung to them tightly and would not leave go. It was of course quite wrong that Kaoru, the child of a commoner, should be brought up with the Akashi Princess's children. But, as Genji well knew, the slightest sign on his part that he was conscious of this impropriety would be taken by Nyosan as a reproach. He was indeed, as has before

been noted, particularly good at guessing what effect his actions would have upon the feelings of others; and he therefore lost no opportunity of showing that the child ranked with him on exactly the same plane as his own grandchildren.

Yūgiri had often watched Kaoru from a distance, but had never made friends with him. Seeing the little boy now peeping at him through a chink in the screen, he picked up a spray of cherry-blossom that had fallen to the floor and, holding it out, called the child to him. Instantly he came toddling along, in his dark blue overall, that contrasted so strongly with the even pallor of his skin. He was, thought Yūgiri, a far handsomer child than the two Akashi boys. Was it only his fancy—the fruit of a suspicion that had long ago formed in his mind—or did Kaoru really bear a certain resemblance to poor Kashiwagi? In the expression of the eyes and the way they were set (though in the child this peculiarity was far more marked) there was something that he could not remember to have met elsewhere. And that smile too. . . . Was he imagining? No. Surely Genji could not see that smile without at once thinking of Kashiwagi. And if so, what did he make of it all? The Akashi princes were a pair of sturdy, quite ordinary good-looking boys. But Kaoru had about him something refined, distinguished, that would have marked him out among a hundred other well-born children. 'What a terrible pity it is,' thought Yūgiri, 'that Tō no Chūjō, who is so heartbroken at Kashiwagi not even leaving a child behind to continue his name, should not know the truth about this little one—always supposing that it is the truth. . . .' And despite all Tō no Chūjō's past hostility, Yūgiri felt a longing to give him this great pleasure; though when he came to think how he should do so, he saw that the idea was quite impracticable. Meanwhile, he was making friends with Kaoru,

who was not in the least shy, and they were soon having wonderful games together.

Genji listened with a slightly ironical smile to Yūgiri's description of his recent visit to the First Ward, and after a few enquiries about such parts of the story as concerned old friends and acquaintances, he said suddenly: 'I hope you are not behaving in such a way as to give Princess Ochiba a false impression. I know by bitter experience that there is a grave risk of this. No doubt you are acting entirely out of regard for the memory of your friend; but any one who hears of these numerous visits is likely to draw a very different conclusion. For your own sake as well as hers you must be careful to make it clear that you have completely disinterested motives for frequenting the house.' Advice on this sort of subject was, thought Yūgiri, his father's speciality. How high-minded were Genji's principles, and how unsuccessful he was in applying them! 'So far from being censured for my attentions to those two ladies,' he answered, 'I should certainly be thought to have behaved very badly if I had not taken their affairs a little in hand. I daresay my description of these visits might easily give the impression that either she or I had not been very discreet. But everything depends upon the circumstances under which things are said or done. A remark that might be very impertinent at one moment may be perfectly harmless at another. Much again (as I am sure you will admit) depends upon the character and age of the people concerned. Ochiba is no longer very young, and I am by no means given to miscellaneous flirtations. If our relation sounds to you to be somewhat too informal, it is because I know that she takes life seriously, and she, that I am to be trusted.' Hence he led on the conversation to a point at which it was quite natural that he should recount his dream. Genji listened without making any comment;

but he perfectly well understood the meaning [1] of the dream. 'I know the flute of which you speak,' he said at last. 'As a matter of fact it ought, properly speaking, to be in this house, for it belonged to Murasaki's father. He allowed Kashiwagi to take it away one day after the Lezpideza Concert, knowing that he was such a fine player. Of course, Ochiba's mother would not know anything of this; it was quite natural that she should give it to you.' This was a mere invention, and Genji was fairly certain that Yūgiri recognized it as such, and all the time knew quite well who was this mysterious 'heir' spoken of by Kashiwagi in the dream. But until Yūgiri made some more definite sign of being in the secret, Genji was not going to give himself away. Yūgiri, seeing that his father was not at all inclined to take him into his confidence, thought he had better postpone the attempt (long overdue) to deliver Kashiwagi's cryptic death-bed message. But the temptation to get the thing over was too much for him, and he said at last, as though it were a casual recollection: 'Soon before Kashiwagi died he gave me various instructions concerning the disposition of his affairs, and at the same time charged me with some mission that was connected with his devotion towards you; or so it seemed. But though he made several attempts to explain the matter I never succeeded in discovering what it was, nor on subsequent reflection have I ever been able to make out exactly what he meant.' He rather overdid these protestations of bewilderment, with the result that Genji became more certain than ever of his having learnt the whole secret. But he was still determined not to commit himself. 'I certainly know no reason why Kashiwagi should ever have thought that I was cross with him,' he said. 'As for the dream, I will think it over quietly and let you know how you should act. There is a saying among

[1] That the flute should be given to Kashiwagi's son Kaoru.

old women that dreams should only be discussed by daylight!' It was evident that nothing was to be got out of him. But the story Yūgiri had just told must have made *some* impression upon his father. What precisely was going on in Genji's mind, he respectfully wondered.

CHAPTER X

YŪGIRI

SO high was Yūgiri's reputation for prudence and fidelity that his constant visits to the First Ward gave rise to no scandal whatever, and were merely regarded as a touching proof of his attachment to Kashiwagi's memory. And hitherto his behaviour had indeed been beyond reproach ; but down underneath his thoughts was a feeling that things would not always go on like this. Ochiba's mother was at a loss how to thank the young man for his extraordinary kindness. She was now less and less able to distract herself, and his continual letters and visits were her chief source of pleasure. In his relation towards Ochiba there had at the beginning been nothing of gallantry or sentiment, and this had become so much a matter of habit that a sudden change on his part would, for both of them, have been very embarrassing. But sooner or later circumstances would surely arise such as would put their friendship naturally and imperceptibly on to a less formal footing. Such circumstances certainly did occur ; but watching Ochiba closely he was obliged to confess that she seemed singularly unwilling to avail herself of them. Tired of these experiments, he was just beginning to think it would be better to tell her straight out that he was in love with her, and see how she took it, when the mother fell seriously ill and was moved away from the City to her estate on the hills. Her former chaplain, a man of great sanctity, who had frequently been successful in exorcising demonic seizures and possessions, was now living in the hills, under a strict vow never to leave the village. But fortunately his place

of retreat was quite near to her estate, and it was with a view to securing his services that she now left the City. The outriders and the carriage in which she travelled were supplied by Yūgiri. It might have been supposed that this would offend Ochiba's brothers-in-law, whose business it clearly was to supply such assistance. But as a matter of fact they were fully occupied with their own affairs, and it never even occurred to them to offer their services. The only one that took any personal interest in Ochiba was Kōbai, but he had always found her so discouraging that in the end he gave up going to the house.

There seemed to be no end to Yūgiri's thoughtfulness. When he heard that services of intercession were being held at the old lady's bedside, he sent alms for the priests and new vestments. The letter of thanks was written by Ochiba herself, for the mother was too ill to write, and every one agreed that it would be uncivil to send a letter dictated to an ordinary amanuensis. The handwriting pleased him uncommonly, and so agreeable was it to receive such a letter, even though the writer was merely transmitting another's sentiments, that he wrote to Ochiba's mother even more often than before, in the hope of receiving similar replies. He longed, of course, to visit them in their country home ; but he knew that Kumoi would regard this as a confirmation of her worst suspicions, and he decided, for the present at any rate, that it would be a mistake to go.

But as the autumn drew on he longed more and more to find out how things were going. Moreover, he knew that on the hills the leaves would be changing, and he had a burning desire to get out into the country.

The excuse he made was that the old chaplain, who seldom left his solitary and unapproachable retreat, had consented to visit his former patron. ' There are various points about which I should like to consult him,' said Yūgiri. ' Such

an opportunity may never occur again, and I shall be able at the same time to find out how Ochiba's mother is really getting on.' He made the journey with only a few outriders and half a dozen personal servants, all clad in hunting-dress. The place lay only a little way into the hills ; but the colours of Oyama, near Matsugasaki, though doubtless not to be compared with the wild and rocky country farther on, excited him far more than the cunningly contrived autumn effects of the great palace gardens at home. The house was surrounded merely by a low brushwood fence, but looked very trim and neat. Inside, though all the arrangements were of a temporary nature, there was everything that the most exacting taste could require. The altar of intercession had been put up in a side-wing opening out of the main hall. The sick woman herself was at the back of the house, and her daughter occupied the western side. It was thought that the malady might be catching, and Ochiba had been advised to stay in the City. But nothing would induce her to do so, and the utmost precaution she would take was to remain at the other end of the house. There were no guest-rooms, and Yūgiri was brought straight to Ochiba's quarters. From here he conducted the usual interchange of messages with the old princess. Ochiba was certainly at the far end of the room, for from behind the curtains of her dais (which having been put up hastily on her arrival was a very flimsy affair) he heard the soft rustling of a skirt, and caught the outline of a form that could only be hers. His heart beat wildly ; but the business of communicating with the sick woman was a very slow one, as she was at the far end of the house, and in the intervals, while the messengers were going to and fro, he fell into conversation with one of the old princess's gentlewomen. ' Considering it is now more than a year since I took your mistress's affairs in hand,' he said, ' it is extraordinary that

Ochiba should still affect to treat me as a complete stranger. She must have heard me arrive ; yet she does not send a word of greeting. I have never known such a thing before. It is the height of absurdity in my case ; and people who know the sort of man I am must really find it hard not to laugh in her face. Just think of it, a steady-going married man of my age, who even when he was younger certainly displayed little of the wildness of youth ! How do you explain her attitude ? ' The lady was in any case at no loss to explain Yūgiri's present indignation. She went and urged Ochiba to show a little more hospitality ; but the princess replied : ' I was obliged to write to him occasionally on my mother's behalf. But he must not take this as a sign on my part that I desire to correspond with him. At the present moment I am far too much taken up with my mother's illness to want to see anybody.' ' This is all very senseless,' he replied, when these words were reported to him. ' She is obviously fretting so much over her mother's illness that she will soon destroy her own health. If you don't mind my saying so, I think your mistress's illness has been largely caused by the distressing spectacle of Ochiba's persistent brooding. I believe that if she could rouse herself a little, it would have an extraordinary effect on her mother, and be the best thing for Lady Ochiba herself. This pretence that my relations are solely with her mother is very tiresome.' To this every one agreed.

Towards sunset a heavy mist began to rise and the hill at the foot of which the house stood now hung above it in dark, featureless bulk ; from among the child-flowers growing along the hedge (their colour subdued to a strange greyness by the mist) came unabated the ceaseless murmuring of insects ; while from among the wild and tangled plantations sounded, cold and clear, the noise of running water. From time to time a melancholy gust of dank wind swept the hills

above, shaking the deep woods; and at intervals there sounded the booming of the gong which marked the close of one service and at the same time the beginning of the next—the new voices striking in almost before the closing notes had died away. Though these sounds and the whole aspect of the place were of a nature to subdue the rovings of an idle fancy, they served but to heighten the passion that was mounting in Yūgiri's breast. The noise of spells and chanting rose more and more insistent from the sick woman's apartments. A rumour spread that she was sinking, and every one trooped off in that direction. A better opportunity to declare his feelings could not, thought Yūgiri, possibly have arisen. The house was now completely shut in by mist. 'It is no use my starting at present,' he said, 'I should never be able to find my way back.' And he sent her the poem: 'Lovelier in their coat of mist, the hills shut out for me the pathway of escape.' 'To hide our country hedge this mist arose; not to detain the idle-hearted guest.' So she answered. That she should reply at all was unusual, and the mere fact that she had done so put out of his head any notion of returning to the City that night. 'But in sober truth,' he said, 'I cannot possibly find my way back. And you will not let me stay here. What do you expect me to do?' Hitherto his indiscreet speeches had always been of such a nature that it was possible to ignore them. But she considered this plea impertinent, and was so much vexed that she refused to continue the discussion. He was all the more disappointed because he realized that such an opportunity might never occur again. He hated her to feel that he was taking advantage of her loneliness; but it could do her no harm to hear once and for all from his lips exactly what were his emotions towards her. He sent for one of his gentlemen who served under him in the Guard and in whom he had complete confidence. 'I

cannot go away until I have seen the chaplain,' he said. 'Hitherto he has not for a moment left the princess's side; but I imagine that he will soon be taking a rest. I shall stay here and try to get a word with him when the night service is over. I wish you and the other officers to stay where you are. But send some of the men to my farm at Kurusuno, which is not far from here, I think. They will be able to get together some fodder for the horses. And there must be no talking among those of you who remain here. If your voices are heard, people will know I have stayed here for the night, and spread a false impression of my object in coming.' 'It is useless for me to think of returning,' he then said to Ochiba in an off-hand manner, 'and I may as well wait here as anywhere else. I hope this will not disturb you. When the chaplain leaves your mother's room, I shall join him.' Never before had he behaved in this impertinent manner. The only effective answer to his insolence would have been to seek shelter in her mother's rooms. But such a course seemed under the circumstances too extreme, and she sat motionless in her chair, wondering what would come next. Nor had she long to wait. For a few minutes afterwards a gentlewoman came with a message, and Yūgiri, upon some excuse or other, accompanied her behind the curtains. The fog was now so thick, even inside the house, that despite the lamp it was almost dark. In sudden terror she made for a sliding door at the back of the room. Dark though it was, he darted unerringly upon her tracks, and was just in time to seize the train of her dress before she closed the door. She shook herself free; but there was no bolt or catch on her side, and holding the door to, she stood trembling like water. 'Is it really so very shocking that I should venture behind your curtains?' he asked. 'I may not be of much importance in your eyes, but I have known you for some while, and

rendered you, perhaps, a few small services.' He now spoke calmly and reasonably of his feelings towards her; but she could only think of his impertinent behaviour in securing this interview, and in her indignation at his intrusion she was scarcely conscious of what were the sentiments that he was patiently labouring to express. 'If to feel as I do,' he continued, 'is an offence, then I have indeed merited your displeasure. But do not for a moment fear that I could possibly be guilty of any other misdemeanour. I am here to speak, and only to speak. Surely I have the right to tell you of thoughts that, unexpressed, would by their violence soon shatter my heart to dust. I have tried again and again to let you know in other ways of the torment I was enduring, but you would not listen to me. Is it so surprising that I should have seized this kindly opportunity? Do not, however, think me worse than I am. Provoke me as you may, I swear to you that I will do no more than frame in words the turmoil that I can no longer lock up unuttered in my breast.' She was still holding the door, but it was clear that he could easily open it if he chose; and he made no attempt to do so. 'Might you not save yourself this trouble?' he asked at last, with a laugh that somehow convinced her he meant no further harm. Her hand fell; he pushed back the door and entered. 'I do not think you know what I am enduring for your sake,' he said presently. 'I am beginning to think that, though you were a wife, you do not understand even the rudiments of love.'

To this and many other remarks that he had made she could think of no reply. He had indeed charged her before with not 'understanding' love; but so far as it meant anything at all the phrase seemed to imply merely a readiness to yield oneself at demand, irrespective of one's own principles or inclinations. 'You are quite wrong,' she said

between her tears. 'I know a good deal more than you suppose—enough to be sure that such cruelty as you have displayed to-night has little indeed to do with love.'

He tried to lead her into the moonlight, for a great wind was now blowing, and the mist had cleared away. But she still held aloof. 'Surely I have proved to you by now that I mean no harm,' he said earnestly. 'Trust me, and you will find that I do nothing without your leave. Come . . .' and he drew her to him. It was now nearing dawn. The moon was shining out of a cloudless sky, its light penetrating even the last hovering remnants of the mist. They were sitting on an open verandah, so shallow that the moon seemed to thrust its face into theirs. He began to talk about Kashiwagi, and she now joined in the conversation quite calmly and happily.

He could not, however, forbear from reproaching her for showing more tenderness to the memory of Kashiwagi, who neglected her, than kindness to himself, who offered her an unbounded admiration. She did not reply, but silently reflected that though there was not much to recommend Kashiwagi either in rank or birth, he was at least a legitimate husband, approved both by her father and his, and able to give her the place that was her due. If even an alliance that seemed so certain of success had failed thus disastrously, what could she expect from an intrigue that would be carried on in the teeth of endless opposition and obstruction? It was not as if Kumoi were a stranger; she was Kashiwagi's sister, and Ochiba had made great friends with her. And Tō no Chūjō, too! What would he think of it all? Wherever her thoughts turned, they fell upon some person near and dear to her whom the news of this liaison would profoundly shock and offend. And if she herself, who alone knew that, despite appearances, her conduct had been irreproachable—if she herself were already so much horrified,

what would be the view of those whose ignorance left them free to make the blackest conjectures? Nor was it any consolation that, for the moment, her mother knew nothing of what was going on. For she would certainly find out in the end, and the fact that it had been kept from her would give the affair in her eyes an even more guilty turn.

Ochiba's mother, though she showed no real signs of recovery, was on certain days perfectly conscious and rational. On one such occasion, when the Daily Intercession was over, the chaplain remained behind and sat by the bed reading incantations. He felt extremely gratified at the patient's improvement. 'The vows of the Great Sun Buddha [1] were not made in vain,' he said. 'I knew well enough that the spells we have worked at so hard could not fail to have their effect. The evil spirit that possesses you has fought well; but it is, after all, a frail wretched thing, shackled with such a load of sin as will never let it prevail against weapons of holiness.' In mentioning the evil spirit he spoke in a stern and angry voice. Then, with a curtness that is often assumed by men of uncompromising piety, he suddenly asked: 'How long has your daughter been going with Yūgiri?' 'I don't know what you are talking about,' said the old lady indignantly. 'He was a great friend of Kashiwagi's, and in memory of their friendship has helped us in one way or another from time to time. I hear he has been here constantly to enquire after me during my illness, and I am sure it is very kind of him. . . .' 'This is all quite unnecessary,' broke in the priest. 'There is no question of concealing the matter from me. This morning as I was going to early service I distinctly saw an extremely handsome young man go out at the door of the Western Wing. There was a good deal of mist about, and I should not myself have recognized him.

[1] See above, p. 229.

But I heard my servitors saying to one another: "There goes Prince Yūgiri. The same business as before. When his carriage came he sent it away, and settled in for the night!" As a matter of fact I should have guessed for myself who it was by the smell he left behind him. It made my head ache. But that young man has always used too much scent.

'This will never do. You must not think I am prejudiced against him. On the contrary, I have been under obligations to his family for a long while. His grandmother always made use of me when she required prayers to be said on his behalf, and since she died he has frequently sent for me himself. But I am not going to countenance an intrigue of this kind. His wife, Lady Kumoi, is not a person with whom it is safe to trifle. What important office of state is there now which one or the other of her relatives does not hold? Moreover, she has borne him eight (or is it nine?) children. You surely do not imagine that your daughter is going to oust her from her place? There will be endless jealousies and bickerings, leading at last to just such shameless and frenzied passions as all too commonly prove to be a woman's undoing, when it is her fate at last to enter into the Long Darkness. And even though your daughter herself may give way to no violent feelings, the jealousy that her situation arouses in this young man's wife will in the end prey equally on Lady Ochiba's soul, and gravely endanger her salvation. In a word, this must stop at once. I insist upon it.'

He became more and more excited and violent in his denunciation of the supposed intrigue, and it was only with difficulty that the old lady at last obtained his attention. 'I was absolutely unaware that anything of the kind was taking place,' she said. 'There was one occasion when my people told me he had been unwell and was resting here so

that he might visit me next day. Perhaps that is what has given rise to these rumours. He has always been so serious-minded, so reliable, that I really cannot think . . .' But she had as a matter of fact noticed one or two queer things, and though Yūgiri was so punctilious, so scrupulously careful to avoid anything that might give rise to gossip, so deferential and courtly in his treatment of women, she yet could imagine from various small indications that, left to himself, with no strange eye upon him to criticize or make note, he might quite well have taken the most unwarranted liberties. And for the last few weeks Ochiba's part of the house had been almost deserted. However, there was one person who must certainly know the truth about the matter: she sent for the maid Koshōshō, who was reluctantly obliged to tell all she knew. 'I was given to understand, Madam,' she said, 'that Prince Yūgiri merely desired to unburden his heart upon some question that has been occupying him since the end of last year. He left before dawn, and I can answer for it that nothing of any consequence took place. I don't know what can have put this idea into people's heads.' She was racking her brain to think who had been the tale-bearer. It never occurred to her that the chaplain might have played this part.

The old lady was extremely upset by these revelations, and began to weep so bitterly that Koshōshō wished a thousand times that she had not been so simple as to tell the truth. She now tried to repair her error by putting the matter in as good a light as possible. 'But, Madam, there was a screen between them. . . .' 'But, Madam, they were not together more than a moment,' and so on. 'What difference does that make?' groaned Ochiba's mother. 'No girl with any common sense or decency would have received him at all. Maybe they did no harm together at all. But that's not the way the story will be told among

the priests here, nor in the kitchens and sculleries either. If only there were some way of explaining to people what really happened! But unfortunately no one in this house can be trusted to do anything. . . .' So she gasped, being now seized upon by a fresh paroxysm of pain.

Very reluctantly Yūgiri decided to spend the next night at home. An immediate repetition of his visit would only serve to strengthen any suspicion that might have been aroused on this last disastrous occasion. Irritable as he had been for months past, he was now a thousand times more restless and gloomy. Kumoi knew, or at any rate could very well conjecture, where he had spent the night. But she did not allude to the matter, and disguised her chagrin by taking part in the games of her children. Late in the evening came a note from Ochiba's mother. It was written in so shaky a hand that he found it hard to read, and was obliged to hold it close to the great lamp. Though Kumoi was behind her curtains-of-state, she instantly became aware of what he was doing, and slipping up behind him, took the letter out of his hand. 'What are you doing?' he cried, starting violently. 'That is not the way to behave. As a matter of fact, this letter is of no interest. It is from her ladyship in the Eastern Wing.[1] She was not very well this morning, and after my audience[2] I ought to have called upon her. But being pressed for time I sent a note to enquire how she was. You can see for yourself that it does not look much like a love-letter! You really must not grab at things in that fashion. You are allowing your rudeness to go further and further every day. You might at least behave properly when there are people in the room.' 'If any one is going "further and further every day" at

[1] The Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers.
[2] With his father, Genji.

the present moment, it is surely you,' was all she answered. But she forced herself to speak lightly, hoping at all costs to dispel his present grimness. He laughed. 'Perhaps you are right,' he said. 'But have you really anything to complain of? Every one must be allowed an occasional distraction; and surely there is not another man in the world who has used this right so sparingly as I. The fidelity of a husband who seemed incapable of venturing one step further afield would in the long run become a very slight satisfaction to you. Indeed, you lose by my particularity. For surely the position of a woman who stands first among many rivals is far more distinguished than that of one who stands alone? Moreover, the affection of the husband is far more likely to be permanent if he is allowed a certain amount of variety and diversion. You would not set much store by my admiration, if it merely meant I were too dull to see the beauty of other women.' He hoped thus to divert her attention and quietly regain possession of the letter. But she laughed at him outright, and presently said: 'You have made these kind provisions for my happiness at a time when I am too old to profit by them. Perhaps if I had more experience in that direction, your present preoccupation would not depress me so much as it does. If ever before I had received unkindness at your hands. . .'[1] The allusion was apt; but he would not accept it. 'Come,' he said, 'to hint at "dereliction" is absurd. You must have been hearing stories that are utterly untrue. It is strange; but some of your people have never lost the spite they felt against me at the beginning—you remember—when I was in the Sixth Rank, and they thought I was not good enough for you. I am sure that now they have been trying to turn you against me by

[1] 'If ever before I had received unkindness at your hands, this sudden dereliction would be less hard to bear.'

some lie or other. It is too bad. I feel it on Ochiba's account as much as my own.' But though Kumoi had probably heard things which were, at the moment, still untrue, the hope he felt that they would soon be true prevented him from protesting very effectively. He discovered that Kumoi's old nurse had indeed been speaking to her very bitterly about him ; but he let the matter pass and did not attempt to justify himself.

As regards the letter, it would have been very unwise to show too much interest in it, and he went to bed without attempting to get it back. But it was very worrying not to know what it contained. He managed unobtrusively, under some pretext or other, to get up and look for it under the couch where she had been lying ; but nothing was there. Having passed a troubled night, he lay in bed late into the morning, and it was only when Kumoi was called away to look after the children that, under cover of dressing and so on, he set to work upon a fresh search. Kumoi, on her side, seeing that he did not press her for the return of the letter, concluded that it was indeed of the dull nature he had described, and even forgot that she had taken it. All the morning she was busily occupied in making dolls, giving first writing-lessons, and romping with high-spirited babies, so that it was small wonder if the matter never entered her head. But Yūgiri was still thinking of nothing else. It had now become imperative that he should send an answer. But if it was apparent by his reply that he had not got the letter with him (and he had really only managed to make out a few words here and there) the old lady would at once suspect that he had left it lying about.

Breakfast was followed by a quiet morning. Suddenly Yūgiri said : ' What happened to that letter you took from me yesterday ? You saw I had scarcely read it ; I wonder you did not give it back to me. I feel rather tired to-day,

and though I ought really to visit her,[1] I do not think I shall even call upon my father. The least I can do is to write her a note. What did she say ? ' He managed to pass this off so well that she felt she had behaved ridiculously over the letter, and said (keeping up her end as best she could) : ' You have a very good excuse. You can say you caught cold when exposing yourself to the mountain air the other night.' ' I did think we had heard the last of that business,' he answered. ' I wonder you are not ashamed to talk of me as though I were a vulgar pleasure-seeker. Your waiting-women, among whom my rigid domesticity has long been a standing joke, would be excessively amused if they could hear the line you are now taking.' Then, breaking off he suddenly exclaimed : ' Well, any way, where is that letter ? ' She promised to find it, but did not immediately do so ; and after a little further talk, he went to take a rest, for it was already growing dark. He was soon disturbed by the din of the crickets in the garden outside. This set him thinking of how noisily they had cried on that mist-bound evening at Ono.[2] He must not let another day go by without answering. He got up quickly and began grinding his ink. Surely there must be some way of framing a reply so that she would not realize he had not kept her letter ? As he sat pondering, he felt a slight unevenness in the cushion under him, and pulling it up to see what was amiss, to his delight and also, as it proved, to his embarrassment, he discovered the missing letter. For it was no less committal than in his most gloomy forebodings he had imagined it. ' Your last letter,' she wrote, ' came at a time when my daughter was visiting my bedside, and was brought to her here. As she seemed at a

[1] The Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers. Yūgiri is pretending that it was from her the letter came.

[2] Ochiba's house in the mountains.

loss how to reply, I am now writing in her stead: "Full clearly have you shown that in your eyes a place for one night's dallying is the moorside where droops the Lady-flower." '

'One night.' It was quite clear what the writer meant to imply. And what must be the conclusion that she had drawn from his protracted silence! It was obvious to him on a second inspection of the letter that it had been written in great distress of mind. He could not help feeling somewhat bitterly against Kumoi, whose foolish trick had inflicted such suspense. But after all, a year or two ago she would never have dreamt of doing such a thing. It was his own changed conduct that had altered hers. He thought for a moment of going straight to Ono. But he felt certain Ochiba would not receive him, even though her mother countenanced his visit. As a matter of fact, it was hopeless in any case; for to-day was his Black Day.[1] Perhaps it was a good thing that circumstances thus conspired against him, he thought virtuously, and hastened to answer the letter. 'The sight of your letter delighted me in more ways than one,' he wrote. 'But the hint of reproof which it contains is rather mysterious. What is it that people have been telling you? "In truth, I lay amid the thickets of the autumn heath; yet by no dalliance of pillowing leaves was my rest comforted." I do not in general think there is much sense in replying to such reproofs; but on this occasion I must protest that you have jumped to conclusions somewhat too rapidly. . . .'

There was a separate letter for Ochiba, and both were given to Tayū, the principal retainer who had been with him on his last visit to Ono, the man being instructed to use the swiftest horse in the stable, with a light Chinese relay-saddle. 'Say that I have been de-

[1] According to the astrologers.

tained at my father's palace,' he whispered, 'and have only just returned.'

Meanwhile things at Ono were not going well. Rather recklessly, as she felt, Ochiba's mother had taken matters into her own hands and protested against Yūgiri's light-minded and casual escapade. And now it was clear that she had offended him. Hour after hour went by; it grew quite dark and still no answer came. This so much upset her that her apparent convalescence was soon a thing of the past, and before the end of the day her condition was as serious as ever. Ochiba, on the other hand, so far from being perturbed by his failure to reappear, regretted nothing save that she had not been a little curter with him on that one occasion. Seeing her mother's distress, she attributed it to horror at the things which were supposed to have taken place on that unfortunate night; and she began trying to explain how little had really happened. But the subject was not easy to talk about. Confusion overcame her, and she left off in the middle. Seeing the girl's embarrassment, her mother was doubly distressed: 'Poor creature!' she thought. 'Has any one of similar talents and position ever been so consistently unfortunate?' At last she said rather bitterly: 'I am going to be disagreeable—a thing which I thought I had long ago done for the last time. It may not have been your fault. . . . But really, from what I hear, it seems as though your behaviour had been incredibly childish. This particular matter is at an end; for it is clear that he does not mean to come near us again. But do, I beg you, be on your guard about this sort of thing in future. I am sure I have taken immense pains with your upbringing. And after all, with regard to affairs of that kind, you are not without experience. . . . Perhaps it was foolish of me, but I assure you this, of all ways, is not the one in which I thought you would get into trouble. A

little firmness, good sense, decision—nothing more was required. I see that you are far indeed from being capable of looking after yourself, and it perturbs me beyond measure to think that I must leave you so soon. Even among commoners there is a feeling—at any rate among the better sort of people—that flippancy does not become a widow; still less should any one of your rank dream of allowing admirers to go in and out in that fashion. I am very sorry your married life brought you so little happiness. You know that the choice always seemed to me singularly inappropriate; but your father, the ex-Emperor, and Kashiwagi's father pressed me so hard that in the end I came over to their side, convinced for the moment that this quite unnecessary match was pre-ordained by Fate. It turned out to be a terrible misfortune, the results of which you will feel all your life. But you had at any rate the satisfaction of knowing that you yourself were in no way to blame, and could reproach Heaven without fear of retort. Such feelings you can no longer entertain; but if you could manage to take no notice of all the unpleasant things that were being said around you, I suppose you might find considerable solace in relations with this young man—if he made a practice of coming here, which I am certain he has not the least intention of doing!'

To this cruelly faithful picture of her predicament she could find no reply. She now sat gently sobbing. Her mother, watching her intently, was moved this time by a sudden outburst of affectionate admiration. 'How handsome you are!' she said. 'There is no one like you. What kink is it in your Fate that made such beauty the rallying point of every imaginable check and disappointment?' Her agitation soon reduced her to a state in which she fell an easy prey to the next onslaught of the 'possession' that had for long past been assailing her. In a moment she had

lost consciousness, and an icy coldness had settled upon her limbs. The chaplains hastily assembled and with frantic supplications sought to revive her. They were all holy men, drawn from inaccessible mountain temples, which they had vowed never to leave till death. The entreaties of Ochiba and her friends had induced them to break their vows ; and if they should now pull down their altars and return to their cells defeated, surely (they protested to Buddha) the Faith would suffer a grave discredit.

It was at this moment that Yūgiri's letter arrived. The sick woman was able, in a fleeting interval of consciousness, to comprehend that Yūgiri made no suggestion of repeating his visit. All, then, was as bad as she had feared. He had on this occasion merely been heartlessly amusing himself. 'And,' remembered Ochiba's mother—it was her last conscious thought—'whatever scandal is talked about this at Court will as likely as not be founded on my own letter.' [1]

Her people were slow to realize that the end had come. She had often before suffered from seizures during which life appeared to be extinct. But now the usual spells had no effect, and at last it was apparent that all was over.

The ninth month had come. Storms were raging in the hills. Not a leaf on any tree ; the whole country wore its most desolate air ; and Ochiba, sensitive to the changing aspects of nature, was in a more wretched state than ever before. So gloomy indeed were her thoughts that she longed continually for death to terminate the terrible monotony of her lonely existence. True, Yūgiri wrote almost every day. His enquiries and the presents he sent gave great satisfaction to the resident priests, whose long seclusion made such distractions exceedingly welcome. But Ochiba, though he sent the most solicitous messages, and sometimes long notes in which he enquired after every

[1] See above, p. 281.

item of her health with the utmost concern, gave no sign of gratification. This was the man, she reasoned, whose heartlessness had preyed upon her mother's mind so that she had died unquietly and carried with her to the grave a burden that would endanger her salvation.[1] It nowadays sufficed merely for his name to be mentioned, and Ochiba's tears would break out afresh. Her people did their best to assist Yūgiri's cause, and when he failed even to obtain a single line in reply he at first attributed this to the mental confusion caused by her mother's death. But as time went by it was apparent that there must be some other cause for what he regarded as her crudely insulting conduct. Had he written letters in which her loss was ignored, letters devoted to the pageants and frivolities of the day, he could have understood her irritation. But he was conscious of having shown the tenderest sympathy, the most delicate appreciation of all she must be feeling. He remembered how when his grandmother had died he had been for a time very much dispirited ; more so, he thought, than his uncle Tō no Chūjō, who had taken the death of his mother very much as a matter of course, and while anxious to do everything that the public would think proper, obviously regarded the whole business as a tiresome waste of time. Even Genji, who was only a son-in-law, had shown much more concern. Among Yūgiri's own contemporaries, the one, strangely enough, who most entered into his feelings was the quiet, almost stolid Kashiwagi. How glad he had been to see him during those days, and how precious his sympathy had been ! And it seemed to Yūgiri exceedingly odd that Ochiba showed no desire for similar consolation.

Kumoi still remained in the same uncertainty as to what was going on. The frequent letters to Ono were all supposed to be connected with Ochiba's recent loss. But the death

[1] Those who die with anything on their minds cannot enter Paradise.

of this excellent lady was not in itself sufficient to account for Yūgiri's listlessness and preoccupation. One evening when he lay on his couch, gazing at the evening sky, she sent one of the children to him with a scrap of paper on which was written : ' Gladly would I console you did I but know whether for the dead you mourn, or for the living thus consume your heart.' He smiled. Why (he asked himself) did it please her to give him this loophole ? She knew well enough that, greatly though he had liked the old princess, her death could not conceivably weigh much in his mind after all these months. Swiftly and negligently he dashed off the reply : ' Nor this, nor that. Who grieves that one particular dewdrop vanishes into the morning air ? ' This was all very well ; but putting aside general considerations as to the fate of dewdrops, it was evident that he had no intention of taking her into his confidence ; and Kumoi was very unhappy.

Yūgiri had thought of waiting till the period of mourning was over before he attempted another visit to Ono. But he found himself unable to hold out so long, and reasoning that, so far as her reputation was concerned, no more harm could happen than had been done already, he was determined not to abandon the quest till his full purpose was achieved. Kumoi might think what she pleased. And however little encouragement he received from Ochiba herself, that phrase about ' one night only ' in her mother's letter gave his renewed attentions a sort of sanction, and would in the last resort make it difficult for her to dismiss him altogether.

It was about the middle of the ninth month. The grandeur of the scenes through which Yūgiri passed was such as could not have failed to awe the dullest, the most unimpressionable visitor. His way lay through forests in which not merely every leaf, but every bough had been caught by the tempest and hurried earthwards, to toss

amid the whirling wreckage from the heights above. As he approached the house, the noise of distant chanting mingled with the clamour of the storm. Close under the fence a group of deer was sheltering from the blasts of the storm, their hoofs pressing upon the brown rice-stalks ; nor did even the harsh tones of the bird-clapper [1] drive them from their refuge. They stood together, crying with a pitiful air. The noise of the torrent startled Yūgiri from his thoughts, bursting upon his ear with its thunderous clang. Only the crickets, their arbours laid low by the storm, were strangely quiet. But one flower, the blue Dragon's Gall, was now rewarded for its long patience, and shining out all dewy amid the dead grass, triumphed at last in its desolate supremacy.

In all this there was nothing out of the ordinary ; but given the nature and circumstances of his visit, these commonplaces of the autumn landscape moved him to an almost unendurable sadness.

Remembering Shōshō no Kimi's gay laugh and handsome face, he felt that to be with her for a little might help to drive away this intolerable depression, and it was for her that he sent when he arrived at the usual western door.

'Closer,' he said. 'If I am obliged to raise my voice we may be overheard, and I want to talk with you seriously. Surely you count it to my credit that I have made my way through the hills at such a season.' He glanced towards the mountain. 'And now the mist is rising,' he said. 'Look how thick. . . .' 'Closer, closer,' he whispered. She pressed forward the curtain behind which she sat, till it obtruded a little way beyond the edge of the reed-blind. She kept pulling her skirts to one side. This Shōshō no Kimi was a sister of the Governor of Yamato, and consequently a cousin of Ochiba, with whom she had been brought

[1] A rattle used by peasants to scare away birds from the crops.

up on terms of complete equality. She was therefore wearing the deepest mourning.

'I am sure it is natural enough that Lady Ochiba should be very much upset,' said Yūgiri at last, 'but I still do not understand why this should involve such persistent rudeness to *me*. I am exasperated to the verge of madness by her refusal to grant me a single word of reply. My mind is going to pieces altogether; every one notices it.' So he went on, and presently mentioned the old princess's last letter, breaking into tears as he did so. 'Your slowness in replying,' said Shōshō no Kimi, weeping even more bitterly than he, 'seemed to have a disastrous effect upon her. She had been much stronger lately; but that one day's suspense undid all the good work. The evil influences that had before possessed her saw their opportunity and were quick to use it. She was in a bad way on one or two occasions at the time of her son-in-law's death, and we sometimes thought it was all over with her. But she had only to remember Lady Ochiba's need, and she would at once make an effort to recover herself. I wish indeed we had some one like her to comfort my cousin Ochiba. She's in such a state she hardly seems to know her own name, and so it goes on from one day's end to another.' So, amid her sobs, she somewhat inconsequently sought to explain Ochiba's silence. 'That's all very well,' he said, 'but it leaves me as puzzled as ever by her mystifications. I am, I hope I may say without rudeness, the one person who can be of use to her at present. Her father [1] is buried away in the clouds on some distant mountain peak, and if he ever gives a thought to family affairs, he is too far off to be of any practical assistance. There is no reason why you yourself should not remonstrate with her when you get the chance. It is really turning into a kind of obstinacy.

[1] Suzaku.

However, it will all come right in the end. She feels at present that she will never want to return into society; but people do not remain in that state of mind indefinitely. Nor do things happen as one plans. . . .' But Shōshō no Kimi gave him no help, and to his repeated messages Ochiba sent only the reply that upon some future occasion, when feeling less dazed by her loss, she would attempt to thank him for his repeated visits.

Back in his palace, he mooned about in so vague and distracted a manner, that the ladies of the household said to one another in shocked tones: 'What a wretched sight the man is! And the last person too whom one would have expected to see in this state.' As for Kumoi, he remembered how often he had praised in her hearing the pleasant relations that prevailed between the members of Genji's household. If she showed any signs of resentment at his interest in Ochiba, he would at once think her a most disagreeable, ungenerous creature. She too, Kumoi felt, could have endured rivals well enough if she had been used to them and if those around her had learned to take them as a matter of course. But from the very beginning her father, her brothers—every one had quoted Yūgiri as an unparalleled example of single-minded devotion; and that even this prodigy of steadfastness should grow tired of her was a humiliation indeed.

So they lay till it was almost dawn, neither heeding the other or showing the least disposition to make friends; and long before the mists had cleared he irritated Kumoi by getting up and writing his usual letter to Ono. This time, however, she played no trick upon him. He wrote at considerable length, and then pushing the letter away from him, began humming a poem to himself. He did this very softly; but Kumoi heard the words: 'No message will you send me save that no message you will send till an unending

night its dreams shall end?' "The Silent Waterfall[1] that from Mount Ono drops . . ." she thought she heard him quote.

The answer came later in the morning. It was a solid-looking epistle, written on stout, brownish paper; and as usual the writer was Shōshō no Kimi. Kumoi watched his face while he read it. Had Princess Ochiba at last broken her silence? As a matter of fact the letter contained nothing but remonstrations from Shōshō upon the uselessness of his continuing to write. 'To prove my point,' she said, 'I enclose your last letter to her, just as it was when I rescued it.' And here was his letter indeed, torn in pieces and covered all over with random scribblings. His first feeling, however, was not so much of pique at the use to which it had been put, as of delight that she had seen and handled it. Piecing together the fragments, he thought he could make out a poem somewhat in this style: 'Ceaseless as the waters of Mount Ono, day and night my silent tears flow.' It was only the old Ono poem twisted a little to suit her own plight; but there were points of interest in the penmanship.

How often had Yūgiri watched other men falling into the helpless state in which he now found himself! There had always seemed to him something unreal in their languishings; and he had spoken of such people with considerable severity, feeling that with a little effort they might at any moment have escaped from their difficulties. But no, there was no escape; nothing to do but to endure.

It was not long before Genji heard what was going on. It had always been a comfort to him that Yūgiri possessed so much good sense and moderation. It was pleasant, for instance, to feel that whatever scandals had to be investigated, Yūgiri's name would never be involved; and

[1] Otonashi no Taki.

the more so because Genji himself had suffered from the effects of a quite opposite reputation. This attachment with Ochiba in any case could bring little happiness to either of them. But it would not have been quite so bad if she had been some one quite outside their circle. As it was, what must Tō no Chūjō and the rest be feeling about it? However, Yūgiri was quite capable of seeing all this for himself. There was nothing that Genji could usefully say. He did not indeed think so much about Yūgiri as about the two ladies. For them he could not help being extremely sorry. He mentioned the affair to Murasaki, one day when he was talking things over with her, and spoke of his own anxiety as to what would become of her when he, like Kashiwagi, should have passed away. She blushed and a look of pain crossed her face; for she knew well enough how unlikely it was that she would survive him. She pitied all women. How impossibly difficult was their position! If they shut themselves away, ignored the existence of beauty, tenderness—of all emotion—what was left, save to sit thinking of darkness and the grave? Nor was it, in the end, of the slightest satisfaction to the parents who bore one, that one should grow up into an inexperienced nonentity; on the contrary, they were extremely disappointed. Was there not a story about the Silent Prince?[1] That was the kind of life women were expected to lead. They must lock everything up in their hearts. But even the clergy regarded silence as one of the hardest

[1] A Buddhist story. The prince, being endowed with knowledge of good and evil, and memory of his past existences, remembered that in the last but one he had spoken an angry word, and consequently spent his next existence in Hell. Having now been born as a prince, he determined to be on the safe side, and did not speak at all. When he was thirteen, the King lost patience with him and gave orders that he was to be buried alive. Upon which the Silent Prince at last spoke. For a version of the story see Chavannes, *Cinq Cent Contes et Apologues*, i, 126.

penances ; and it was only by consenting to speak at last that the Silent Prince, despite all his 'knowledge of good and evil,' managed to avoid being buried alive. And even if one could settle, to one's own satisfaction, on a correct middle course, the difficulties of pursuing it were immense.... It was not of herself, of course, that she was thinking, but of her adopted child, the Akashi Princess.

Curious to see how he would take it, Genji began speaking of their friends at Ono next time Yūgiri came to his palace. 'So the mourning for Ochiba's mother will soon be over,' he said. 'It must be just thirty years since Suzaku first took her under his protection. . . . A lifetime, yes, that is what a whole lifetime looks like when one sees it stretched out! The night is soon over, the dewdrops vanish in the sun, and "what worth gaining, to hold so short a while?" But after she had taken her vows and turned her back on the world, I fancy she settled down into a not too uncomfortable existence. I am sorry she is gone. A great misfortune, a very great misfortune.' 'Yes, indeed,' said Yūgiri, 'when one sees what useless and unimportant people are spoken of at their decease as "losses to the country."' 'The ceremonies on the forty-ninth day,' he continued, 'are left entirely in the hands of her nephew, the Governor of Yamato. It is a wretched business ; and somehow her evident loss of all influence and proper support makes a more painful impression now that she is gone than ever during her lifetime.'

'It has no doubt been a great shock to Suzaku,' said Genji. 'But I am chiefly sorry for the daughter. I hear, by the way, that she is pretty ; after Nyosan, she was certainly her father's favourite.' 'About the daughter,' said Yūgiri, 'I know very little. But I believe the mother was a very agreeable woman. I did not know her well ; but on one or two occasions I was able to be of some slight service to her.' If his son had lied less flatly, Genji would

have felt it possible to continue the conversation. But such an attitude betokened a state of mind that was far removed from either inviting or accepting advice. He felt in any case the absurdity of such a person as himself taking a high line about these questions, and changed the subject.

In point of fact the arrangements for the service of the Forty-ninth Day were made almost entirely by Yūgiri, who took the utmost pains in planning every detail. The reason for all this zest on his part was naturally the subject of much speculation. Tō no Chūjō, when the matter was mentioned to him, was disinclined, from what he knew of Yūgiri's character, to credit the existence of any scandal, and chiefly blamed Ochiba for allowing an outside person to play so prominent a part in the proceedings.

It reached Suzaku's ears that she intended to stay at Ono and become a nun. 'I hope you will do nothing of the kind,' he wrote. 'It is, I know, generally considered creditable for a widow to remain in retirement. But there are circumstances under which, for a girl like you, with no one to take her side, such a course might have an opposite effect, both in this life and the next, to that which you imagine. At this moment I do not think you can either withdraw from the Court without giving countenance to undesirable rumours, or embrace the religious life in a suitable state of mind. If you are really bent upon religion, pray do nothing irretrievable till you have given your feelings time to subside. . . .' He wrote several times to this effect. It was evident that he had heard her name coupled with Yūgiri's, and was afraid it would be thought that she was leaving the world in a fit of pique at the affair not having gone as she wished.

The news that Ochiba was soon returning to Court put Yūgiri in a difficult position. If he acted as one already having claims upon her, it would give the impression that

the late princess had not exercised her functions with proper strictness—an aspersion which, even though it were not taken very seriously, he did not care to inflict upon the dead woman's reputation. But to convince the world that the attachment had just commenced, to re-enact all the familiar stages of incipient attraction, courtship and melancholy was more than could be expected of him.

As soon as the day of her arrival had been fixed, he sent for the Governor of Yamato and consulted with him as to what could be done to make the palace in the First Ward less uncomfortable. Even before the removal to Ono the place had for so long been inhabited by women only that everything had run very much to seed. He now gave orders for a general cleaning up of the rooms and a complete new set of hangings, screens, curtains-of-state and the like, seeing to every detail himself. It was arranged that these fittings should be made as quickly as possible in the Governor's own house.

When the day came Yūgiri sent his carriage and outriders to fetch her, but did not go himself. To her protestations that she had no intention of leaving Ono, her cousin, the Governor of Yamato, replied: 'Madam, in this matter you must bow to my judgment. I feel for you deeply, and have for some time past done everything in my power to assist you. But I have my province to think of; urgent affairs await me, and I must return at once. Fortunately things are not so bad as they might be. I am handing on the direction of your household to a most loyal and painstaking successor. I am not suggesting that you should accept him in any capacity other than mine has lately been. But should you choose to do so, you would have many precedents in your favour; nor would any one have a right to blame you, even though it were known that the attachment were solely on his side. For a lady's intentions, however deter-

mined she may be, cannot be put into practice without the aid of some admirer who is ready to place his influence and resources at her disposal. Do not think that I mistrust your intelligence. Your decisions, I am sure, will always be excellent; I merely question your ability to carry them out.' And then turning to Ochiba's ladies: 'I regard you all as very much to blame in this matter. You set the whole thing going, and now, I have reason to believe, you are refusing to carry messages or give the unfortunate gentleman any reasonable assistance.' Thus reproached, her waiting-women gathered round her and began to attire her in the new clothes into which she was to change for the journey. She was prevailed upon at last to let them dress the hair—full six feet of it—that she longed so ardently to sacrifice.[1] It grew a little thinner than formerly, though not to an extent that any one else would have noticed. But Ochiba now surveyed it with dismay. How altered she was, in this and every way! Never again would she dare to show herself. . . .' 'Come now,' her ladies cried, 'we should have been on the road hours ago. It will soon be getting dark.' One had slipped out with a toilet-case, another with a clothes-box. Hampers, sacks one by one had been laid upon the wagons. There was no one left in the house, and at last, since she could not stay there all alone, weeping bitterly she climbed into the carriage that Yūgiri had sent.

At last they arrived. What had happened to her mother's house? Who were all these people that crowded the passages? Whence this strange air of festivity? And hardly able to believe that this was indeed her old home, Ochiba sat motionless in the carriage long after it had halted.

Yūgiri was waiting in the eastern wing of the palace. He had brought so many possessions with him that Kumoi's

[1] I.e. to become a nun.

people concluded he was about to make a long stay. 'He might have given us a little warning,' they said. 'When, pray, did the ceremony[1] take place?' It was assumed that a relationship had been going on in secret for years past. To no one did it occur that the attachment was not mutual; a state of affairs very unfortunate for Ochiba.

When supper was over and everything had quieted down, Yūgiri went to Shōshō no Kimi and commenced his usual appeal. 'Surely you can make up your mind to let her alone for a day or two,' the girl said. 'We can all trust you to remain faithful for as long as that. Madam, so far from being any more cheerful to-day, has felt this home-coming very bitterly, and it is no use trying to approach her. I must ask you, on my own behalf, to show a little consideration; for if anything puts her out, all the burden falls on me. It really is not possible to do anything with her when she is in this state.' 'That is very odd,' said Yūgiri. 'I should never have supposed, from what I know of her, that she was so churlish and unmanageable . . .' and he began to advance every reason why it must inevitably be not only to his advantage but also to hers—why no one could possibly blame them, till Shōshō no Kimi interrupted impatiently: 'You might as well ask me to bring messages to a corpse. I tell you she is half out of her wits, and were I to talk to her all night, she would not at the end of it have understood a word I said. I am sure, Sir, you would not wish to take advantage of her while she is in such a condition.' And she wrung her hands. 'This is unheard-of,' he cried. 'No one can ever have been insulted in so brutal a manner before. It would surprise her to learn how any outside person would be struck by such conduct.' 'You have very little experience of the world,' she laughed, 'if this is what you call "unheard-of."' And as for appealing

[1] The formal betrothal.

to outsiders, I think the less said about that the better. I am not at all sure that they would be on your side.' But though she stood up to him so well, she could not, as he was now in charge of the household, close doors against him, and presently the two of them together entered the princess's room. How could one combat such impertinence, such callous lack of consideration? Ochiba did something which she knew would be thought childish and undignified. Picking up a mattress, she rushed into the store-room and locked the door from within. How long would she have to stay here? There was no knowing. All her people seemed now to be on Yūgiri's side; and in utter wretchedness she settled down there for the night. He for his part, when he had got over his first indignation and surprise, felt calmer. This was decisive; there could be no question of any completer rebuff. Here they were for the night, for all the world like those unfortunate birds the *yamadori*,[1] one on each side of the door. At last the dawn broke, and as he was not anxious to publish too widely the fact that *this* was the way in which they had spent the night, he now left the house, after once more attempting in vain to induce her to open the door even so much as a crack.

He went to his father's palace to rest, and there got into conversation with the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers. 'What does Kumoi think of Ochiba's return to the First Ward?' she asked in her mild, tranquil voice. 'So people are making a story out of that, are they?' he said. 'The truth is quite simple. At first Ochiba's mother was adverse to my taking charge of her daughter. But in her last hours she felt very anxious as to what would become of Ochiba, were she left with no one to manage her affairs, and as I had been a great friend of Kashiwagi, she

[1] The copper pheasant; the male and female are supposed to sleep one on each side of the valley.

withdrew her objection and begged me to help Ochiba in every way. There was nothing scandalous or surprising in my having brought her back to the First Ward; all such ideas are the mere invention of gossips and busybodies. As for Ochiba'—and here he laughed slightly—'she talks of nothing but becoming a nun, which shows that my devotion is not of much interest to her Perhaps it would be the best thing, after all, if she did go into a nunnery; for at present my position both with her and with Kumoi is an impossible one. But till she does so, I must continue to help her as best I can—to do what her mother would have wished.

'Next time my father comes to see you, please explain all this to him, if you get the chance. I have been frightened to mention it, lest he should think that, after all this time, I have suddenly become frivolous in my behaviour. . . . Though as a matter of fact in things of that kind there is no reason for me to fear reproach, either from others or from my own conscience.' 'I always thought,' she answered, 'that a quite wrong account had been given of the matter; and now I see that I was right. And really, there is no reason why you should not have two wives if you want to. I am only sorry for the poor little princess. She has had things all her own way for so long.' '"Poor little princess," indeed!' exclaimed Yūgiri indignantly. 'It is hard to recognize her in such a description. She is very well able to look after herself, I assure you. "Little demon" would describe her better, when she fancies her rights are being infringed. And why should you suppose I am going to ill-treat her? If you will forgive my saying so, I should have thought your own case showed how much was to be gained in the end by a little patience and self-restraint. A man may for the moment be hustled by tears and demonstrations; but promises exacted in that way are

broken immediately, and at the same time leave behind them a disagreeable feeling on both sides. As you know, I have always admired my stepmother in many ways ; but nothing about her has ever struck me as more admirable than her forbearance with regard to you.' She was not deceived by this flattery. ' That is only your way of making clear how little so insignificant a person as myself can know of such a situation,' she said, smiling. ' But I cannot believe that Genji, of all people, would dare to make any fuss about a matter of this kind, even to me in private. That would really be more than one could tolerate. . . .' ' You are quite wrong,' answered Yūgiri. ' He has often held forth to me about such matters ; and naturally, however bad his advice may be, I am bound to appear impressed. I know the situation is rather absurd.'

But to return to the palace in the First Ward. ' Madam,' said Ochiba's maids, ' you cannot continue to shut yourself up every time he calls. Would it not be better to receive him once in the usual way, and if you wish to break with him, tell him so properly, and have done with the business for good and all ? ' But she did not feel that she owed any consideration to one who had shown none to her and had already inflicted upon her reputation injuries which it would take years to efface.

' Our mistress says that if later on, when she is feeling more inclined for conversation, you are still kind enough to remember her, she will see whether she cannot arrange to talk with you. But at present, while the memory of her mother's death is still so recent, she begs to be excused.' So reported one of the maids. ' But the fact of the matter is,' she went on, ' that every one already regards you as a married pair, and this naturally annoys her extremely.' ' But it is not as though on any previous occasion I had taken advantage of her, as many men would have done . . .

Tell her that if she will come out into her room, I will make no objection to there being a screen between us, so long as I am allowed to tell her of what I am suffering—which will certainly not break her heart to hear! Let her grant me this, and she shall hear no more from me for many a long month.' So Yūgiri pleaded; and when all other arguments proved vain, he put it at last to Shōshō no Kimi that if he were now to absent himself altogether, it would be thought that he had tired of Ochiba—an assumption more wounding to her pride than any of the rumours that were already afoot.

This was undeniable, and Yūgiri (it was evident) would be so abjectly grateful for a mere glimpse of the princess, that Shōshō no Kimi weakened, and finally showed him how to enter the store-room by a secret door that led into the maids' rooms on the north side. That one of the ordinary servants should be talked round into betraying her was natural enough, the world being as it is. But here was Shōshō no Kimi, her kinswoman, the one person whom she believed to be really on her side, handing her over to the enemy without a moment's compunction. Yūgiri was now addressing to her every conceivable form of specious argument and entreaty. But though he spoke with what she recognized to be great eloquence and spirit, she remained entirely unmoved, sitting before him with her robe (for she was wearing no mantle) clutched tightly to her. Her determination to thwart him was evidently so intense, and her whole attitude expressed such profound horror at his proximity, that for the first time he began to think this was no mere shyness or widowly discretion. Almost any woman, he felt, would have shown some response to such a courtship as his had been. But she, through it all, had been unbending as an oak. He had heard of intense, unreasoning dislikes, for which no cause, save an adverse experience in

some previous life, could be assigned. But so clear a case as this he never thought to have discovered. Was this all that he had got in return for so much that he had thrown away? And he remembered the time before any difficulties grew up between him and Kumoi—all the small secrets and confidences that had made those years so delightful. Suddenly he lapsed into silence; his pleading was at an end. They both sat waiting for the dawn.

Though called a store-room, the place where they sat was not much encumbered. There were a few chests, full of perfumes, and some tray-stands, all pushed well out of the way, so that the effect was that of a small and rather cosy room. It had hitherto been quite dark; but now a ray of daylight suddenly darted in at the open door. She had buried her head in the folds of her robe. He leant forward and pulled the dress. Her hair fell in a tangle about her face, and it was only when he had pushed it back that he could at last make out her features in the growing light. It was an interesting, lively face that met his gaze; aristocratic, yet soft and womanly. And what did she think of him? In truth, she liked him as she saw him now far better than when he was dressed up for company. But it was impossible that he should see anything in her. Had not Kashiwagi (who had far less right to be particular) found her utterly unattractive? And that was years ago, when she was very different indeed from what she was now. . . . Thus she reasoned with herself. And what would her father and Tō no Chūjō think? Then there was her mother's death. . . . If only the period of mourning were over. . . . It took Yūgiri a long time to contend with all these arguments.

When breakfast was served (not in the store-room, I need hardly say!) it was thought that the dark furniture used during her mourning would strike a jarring note, and a space

was divided off at one end of the room, her screen-of-state being of clove-grey, and the furniture in general of not too sumptuous a nature. The meal was served on a two-shelved sideboard of plain sandal-wood, all these things having been provided beforehand by the Governor of Yamato.

The attendants were dressed in inconspicuous shades of yellow, plum-colour, grey and brown, with a few in lighter and gayer colour mixed among them. As the union had taken place in a woman's establishment, there were many details in the traditional rite which could not be observed; nor had there been any one except the Governor to arrange matters and instruct the under-servants in their duties. On hearing that so distinguished a guest was settled in the house, many family retainers who were not for the moment on duty hastened to the palace, and were received by Yūgiri in what I think is called the estate-office.

When Kumoi found that he showed no signs of returning from the palace in the First Ward, she felt that she had gone on long enough defending him. People were right. He was no longer the same steady, unchanging Yūgiri of former days. Of that Yūgiri not a scrap was left; and seeing no reason why she should put up with further humiliation at his hands, she called at Tō no Chūjō's house, and alleging an unfavourable conjunction of the stars, established herself there apparently for the night. It so happened that Lady Chūjō was home on a visit. Kumoi found considerable comfort in her sister's company, and prolonged her stay.

Tō no Chūjō had heard rumours of Yūgiri's new attachment, and was not surprised that the affair should have come to a head. He thought Kumoi's flight an unnecessarily violent form of protest; but then she had always been quick-tempered and headstrong.

However, if Kumoi was difficult to deal with, her father was ten times more so. No one had ever insisted so punc-

tiliously upon his rights as head of the family. He seemed almost to take pleasure in parading his intractability. Yūgiri was convinced that if he presented himself at the Great Hall, his father-in-law would behave in the most unreasonable way. 'Disgraceful. Not a word. Out of my sight!' That was his style, and Yūgiri felt he could not face such a scene.

Kumoi had left some of the children behind; but the little girls, who were mere babies, she had taken with her to Tō no Chūjō's palace. Upon Yūgiri's first return to his home the little boys were wild with delight and clustered round him. One of them, however, began to cry, saying he was unhappy without his mother, which Yūgiri found very harassing. He wrote letter after letter begging Kumoi to return, and even sent a carriage to fetch her; but all to no effect. Her obstinacy was beginning to irritate him, and he felt very much inclined to leave things as they were. But this, he feared, might make a bad impression upon her father, and towards evening he called in person at the house. He went at once to the quarters she usually occupied when on a visit here. Kumoi was nowhere to be seen; but he eventually found some of her ladies, and the little girls with their nurse. From them he learned that Kumoi was living in the central building with her sister. 'You establish yourself in your sister's apartments, as though you were not yet of age, leaving some of your children at home and the rest in a distant wing of this palace. Pray tell me what all this means. I have realized for a long time past that your head was full of the most ridiculous notions; but I did not think that, after all the devotion I have shown you in past times, you would fly both from me and our large family of children upon what is after all so flimsy a pretext.' This was the rather testy note he sent in to her. She replied: 'What good can come of my returning to you? At present

you are tired of me, and I see no reason to suppose that this feeling is not permanent. As for the children, I am delighted to find that you take such an interest in them.'

He made no further effort to bring her back with him, and spent the night alone. What kind of man can he have been (Yūgiri asked himself) who started the notion that love was an agreeable business? To distract himself he had the little boys put to sleep where he could see them. But he got little rest; for no sooner had he stopped thinking about the disastrous flight of Kumoi than he began worrying about Ochiba. How much would she be upset by his absence to-night? Would all his work in that quarter have to be begun over again?

Next morning he wrote to Kumoi: 'I think your decision will be regarded by every one as very unreasonable; but such as it is I am willing to accept it. The children you have left behind with me are naturally much distressed at your absence. But I presume you had reasons of your own for deserting them as you did, and you must leave it to me to make such provision for them as I think best.' There seemed in this to be hidden some form of threat. Did he mean to hand them over to a stepmother? Monstrous as such a demand would be, she thought him quite capable of it. Later on he even asked that the girls might be sent back to him. 'It will henceforward be very difficult for me to have any dealings with your father,' he wrote, 'and I shall probably never see the little girls at all, unless they come here. Surely it would be better to bring up all the children together?' The boys were pretty creatures, still quite small. 'Do not listen to your mother,' he said to them. 'There are many things which she does not properly understand, and this has given her some harsh ideas, that are doing us all great harm.'

So far from being indignant with Yūgiri, Tō no Chūjō

thought that his daughter was merely making herself ridiculous by this sudden decampment. 'You might have waited a little,' he said to Kumoi, 'to see how things would go. Yūgiri is after all a man of considerable good sense. Such headstrong and precipitate behaviour does not sit at all well upon a woman. However, since you have adopted this line, you must stick to it for the present. We shall see later on what steps he will take to get you back.'

To Ochiba Tō no Chūjō sent the poem: 'Because of the bond that was between us I will keep you a place in my heart. But for sympathy you must ask me no longer—you who now have more than your share!' As messenger he chose his son Ben no Shōshō, who had known the house very well in Kashiwagi's time, and walked straight in. He was given a seat on the verandah outside the women's quarters; but none of the ladies seemed much inclined for conversation. In Ochiba his visit naturally awakened painful memories. He was the best-looking and most promising of Tō no Chūjō's sons, and as she watched him from within, Ochiba was astonished by his resemblance to Kashiwagi. 'Can it be,' he wrote, 'that you intend to treat me, who came so often to this house, as an utter stranger?'

She found Tō no Chūjō's poem very hard to answer. Her maids insisted that it could not be dealt with by proxy If only her mother were there to help her with it. She perhaps would be vexed at the circumstances that had called forth Tō no Chūjō's protest. But her mother had always been ready to help her out of a difficulty, even to screen her misdoings.

'How can I, that am but one person, at the same time merit both sympathy and reproach?' Such was the tenor of her reply, and merely folding it up she sent it out to Ben no Shōshō unsealed. 'For a person who used to know the

house,' he was saying to her ladies, 'it is rather dispiriting to be left on the verandah in this way. I see that if I am to be regarded as a privileged person I must come here often. Full admittance is no doubt only granted as the reward of long assiduity. So expect to see me here frequently,' and with this attempt at levity he withdrew.

At the time when Ochiba was giving him no encouragement and Yūgiri's distraction was most trying to those who lived with him, Kumoi suddenly received a letter from Koremitsu's [1] daughter. Kumoi, this lady supposed, had always regarded her with complete indifference. Yet somehow the news of what was going on at Ono moved her to write a letter of sympathy, and it was followed by others. In her poem she said: 'I that am nothing, not for my own sake but for yours with tear-wet sleeve lament that love grows cold.' Kumoi thought this perhaps a trifle impertinent; but receiving it as she did at a time of profound discouragement, she was by no means displeased to discover sympathy even in so humble a quarter. 'How often have I grieved for others in this same plight, and little dreamed how soon it would be mine.' This was all that she sent in reply; but simple though the words were, Koremitsu's daughter did not doubt their sincerity.

It should be explained that during the period when Tō no Chūjō kept Yūgiri away from Kumoi, he had carried on a secret affair with this daughter of Koremitsu. After his marriage he saw her only on very rare occasions. By Kumoi he had four boys and four girls; by Koremitsu's daughter two boys and two girls. All twelve were handsome and well-grown children, particularly the four born to him in this secret union, who were also very intelligent. The younger girl and younger boy were left with Koremitsu's

[1] Genji's retainer. See vol. i, *passim*. Yūgiri had fallen in love with her when she was at the Palace as a Gosechi dancer. See vol. iii, p. 130.

daughter. But the older boy and girl were educated by the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers, who made a great fuss of them. Here they were often seen by Genji and became great favourites with him.

And so for the present we may leave Yūgiri and his affairs.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAW

THOUGH Murasaki was apparently no longer in immediate danger, her illness had now lasted so many months that there appeared to be little hope of recovery. To Genji it seemed that her strength was gradually ebbing away. The thought of surviving her appalled him; and she herself, without anxiety for the future[1] (she was indeed to a singular extent devoid of such fetters as commonly bind us to the world), had no misgiving, save the thought of what her death would mean to one who had been her companion so long.

Her thoughts, as was natural, turned much upon the life to come, and her time was spent in numerous charities and consecrations. Best of all, she would still have liked to spend the remaining moments of her life in some place where they could be wholly devoted to religion; but Genji would not give her leave. However, he had himself often expressed an intention of pursuing the same course. Why should they not then do so together? But certain though their faith might be that in Amida's Paradise the same lotus would be their throne, in the meanwhile, he in his convent and she in her nunnery, however near they might be, would not be able to meet. His anxiety, if she should grow suddenly worse, the mere thought that she was in pain, would (Genji well knew) make havoc of his meditations. Yes, he must content himself to lag behind, where so many frail creatures[2] had gone forward unafraid.

[1] She had married off her adopted child, the Akashi Princess, to the Emperor.

[2] Utsusemi, Fujitsubo, Nyosan, etc.

She might indeed have acted without his permission; but to have obtained her end by such a course would, she knew, give her no satisfaction, and she felt aggrieved that her wish was still denied. Perhaps however (she reflected) it was not his fault. No doubt some sin of her own was weighing upon her and holding her back from spiritual progress.

Some while ago she had caused a thousand copies of the Lotus Scripture to be made, and she now hastened to give them as an offering. The ceremony was to take place in the Nijō-in, which she had come to regard as her home. The robes for the seven ministrants were also her gift, and every detail, down to the stitching of the seams, was designed according to her directions. She had not told Genji what was afoot, but he naturally saw something of the preparations, and admired the taste and knowledge that marked her handling of religious as well as of all other activities; and he managed, while not knowing exactly what was needed, to make a few such general contributions as could not come amiss. Yūgiri was in charge of the dancers and music. Presents and contributions poured in from the Emperor, the Crown Prince, the Empress, and all the great ladies at Court, in such numbers that the messengers would at any time have packed the corridors almost to overflowing. It may be imagined then what was the scene when they were added to the throngs that were already assembled for the Service.[1]

[1] The service consisted of the reading of the Lotus Scripture; this required eight sittings. There was also the drama of the Woodman, one priest playing the part of Shākyamuni when he was a woodman, and the rest walking round him in circle and chanting the *Woodman's Song*: 'Had I not cut firewood and drawn water for the rishi, would you now possess the Scripture of the Lotus Flower?'

This refers to a legend that in a previous incarnation Buddha obtained the doctrine of the Lotus Scripture from a rishi whom he served as henchman.

It was the tenth day of the third month. The trees were all in blossom, the weather mild and calm ; indeed it seemed as though Paradise itself were not far away, and even an unbeliever could not but have regained his innocence. The Woodman's Song, resounding from so many lips, moved Murasaki intensely, as indeed it would have done at any time in her life. But to-day the words had a new significance. 'Though in life no prize awaits me, yet am I sad to know the firewood is burnt out and soon the flame will sink.' So she wrote, and sent the poem to the Lady of Akashi, by the hand of little Prince Niou. To answer in the same strain would be thought unfeeling, should any one chance to hear of it, and though the reply seemed to her somewhat forced, the Lady of Akashi wrote: 'For a thousand years did the Blessed One that hermit serve ; and shall your flame so soon amid the faggots of his Law expire ? '

All night long the chanting continued, to the perpetual beatings of gongs and drums. As dawn began to break and the colours of the flowers showed forth again where the morning air had rent the mist, Murasaki felt that Spring, the season she had loved, still had the power to call her back. And while from every branch came a twittering of birds, that made even the shrill music of the flutes seem dumb, the dancer stepped the dance of Prince Ling.[1] The effect of the final movement, especially of the gay, rapid passage at the end (given the place and hour), was tremendous. Gifts poured in upon the performers, those present in their excitement stripping the cloaks off their own backs and heaping them before the dancers and musicians. Then followed a concert in which all the notable players at Court took their part. Every one seemed happy and excited

[1] *The Ranryō-o.* Prince Ling had a face of womanish beauty and found that in battle his enemies were not afraid of him. He therefore took to wearing a ferocious mask. But some say he wore it to protect his complexion.

'A little longer,' thought Murasaki; and she felt there were after all many things that it was sad to lose.

But she had on the day before exerted herself far more than usual, and was now very fatigued. When she thought that all these people, whom she had for so many years past seen at similar gatherings, such a one always with his flute, another with his zithern, were before her for the last time, she raised herself with an effort and looked fixedly at each one. And then there were the ladies with whom, at the summer and winter festivals, she had carried on a kind of rivalry. Sometimes, over these concerts and sports, there had even been, underneath the outward show of good manners, a certain element of jealousy and bitterness. Yet she loved them all; and now they, for a time at any rate, would stay behind, while she, all alone, set out she knew not whither.

So grave was her condition during the summer heats, that the Akashi Princess obtained leave of absence from the Palace, and settled in the Nijō-in. She was to occupy the eastern wing, but ceremonies of reception took place in the Main Hall. The procedure was the same as that which Murasaki had witnessed many times before. But to-day it moved her strangely, for she felt it to be her last glimpse of the outside world; and as the names of the attendant officers were called, her ear strained eagerly for the response of this or that long-familiar voice. It was some while since she had seen the Princess and there was much to say. 'I am so glad you have come here first,' Murasaki greeted her. 'I hear you are to be quartered far off in the eastern wing. Once you are settled there, it will be tiresome for you to come over here; and I am afraid I shall scarcely be able to visit you. . . .'

The Princess remained with her a long while, and they were presently joined by the Lady of Akashi. During the

conversation that followed, Murasaki made no allusion to her own approaching death. But she let fall now and then a few words, spoken very seriously and quietly, which showed that the transience of all human things ran constantly through her thoughts. Seeing the Akashi Princess's children she shed a few tears. How dearly she would have loved to see what became of them! Her tear-stained face was so lovely, and she looked in every way so far the reverse of haggard or ailing, that the Princess could hardly believe the truth of the dismal reports she had heard. This mysterious and ever-growing weakness—whence came it and how had it begun? Murasaki did at last refer to her death, but in a quite matter-of-fact way, saying in the course of conversation: 'There are one or two servants who have been here for years past. I do not like to think of their being left without support. Perhaps, when I am no longer here, you would not mind keeping an eye upon them,' and she named several of such officers and retainers to the Akashi Princess.

Presently, when the others had retired, to prayers or what not, Murasaki, during a respite of her malady, sent for little Niou, who was her favourite among all the royal children, and said to him: 'If I were not here, would you sometimes think about me?' 'Yes, indeed I would,' he said. 'I love my father, the Emperor, and Madam my mother too; but not half as much as I love my dear granny. Without you I should be very sad,' and trying to hide his tears, he hastily brushed his sleeve across his face with so pretty a gesture that she could not help smiling. 'When you are grown up,' she said, 'you shall have this house for your own, and in the flower-season you will have the red plum and cherry tree in front of your window. Enjoy them, and sometimes, should you think of it, offer a spray or two of blossom to the Lord Buddha.' He watched her face

earnestly while she spoke, and nodded at the end. Then, feeling that he could no longer check his tears, he left the room.

The cool of autumn brought her a certain measure of relief; but the slightest exertion was sufficient to cause a relapse. The weather was at no time very severe; but as the season wore on she suffered from a continual sense of damp and chill. The time for the Princess's return to Court had come. Murasaki longed to beg for an extension of her visit; but the Emperor was already chafing at her long absence. Messengers were continually arriving from Court, and it would have been impertinent to detain her for more than a few hours longer. Since it was utterly out of the question that Murasaki should pay the customary visit to the Princess's quarters, the Princess, contrary to all precedent, condescended to visit her. The sick woman felt embarrassed at causing this difficulty; but she longed passionately to see the girl once more, and finally all the royal gear was carried to the Main Hall.

A cold wind had sprung up towards evening; but Murasaki, wanting to get a better view of the garden, had been helped on to a couch by the window. Genji was delighted to see her capable of so much exertion. 'You seemed to get on much better to-day,' he said. 'I believe it has given you new strength to have the Princess so near you.' His delight at her supposed improvement only brought home to her all the more poignantly how terrible was the blow that awaited him. 'Hopes then the dewdrop upon the wind-swept grasses of the heath to build a safe abode?' Such was the acrostic [1] poem she recited; and he: 'Where all things race so madly to their doom, why think one fragile dewdrop will be first to reach the destined goal?'

'Now,' she said presently, 'you had better go back to

[1] Play on *oku*, 'to settle' (of dew) and *oku*, 'to rise from bed.'

your rooms. I am feeling very giddy ; and though I know you would forgive me if I did not entertain you properly, I do not like to feel that I have been behaving badly.' Her screens-of-state were drawn in close about the couch. The Princess stood holding Murasaki's hand in hers. She seemed indeed to be fading like a dewdrop from the grass. So certain seemed the approach of death that messengers were sent in every direction to bid the priests read scriptures for her salvation. But she had more than once recovered from such attacks as these, and it was hoped that this was merely another onslaught of the 'possession' that had attacked her years before. All night long various prayers and incantations were kept going, but in vain ; for she died next morning soon after sunrise.

The Akashi Princess was profoundly thankful that she had stayed to witness the end. The event, though so long expected, left all her people in a state of dazed bewilderment. Genji himself broke down completely, and when Yūgiri arrived, felt disposed to put all arrangements into his son's hands. Summoning him to where she lay, Genji said : 'You know that it was always her desire to take Orders before she died ; but not realizing how swiftly the end would come, I would not give her leave—which I now deeply regret. The chaplains who were on duty during the night have apparently all left the house, or at least I hear no sound of them. But there is probably still some priest or other to be found. It is not too late to do what may, with Buddha's help, aid her on the dark road she must tread.'[1]

'I have known many cases,' said Yūgiri, 'in which a possessing spirit was thwarted by such a course, and it might well have been so in her case. They say that to

[1] Administer the tonsure ; this was often done to the dying, and occasionally to the dead.

have joined a holy Order for a single day or night brings great benefit in the life hereafter. But now that she is dead, what sense can there be in administering the tonsure? You will only be making the scenes which must ensue more depressing for yourself, without affording any assistance to her in the journey beyond the grave.' Certain priests had, it was found, stayed behind to watch the body, and sending for them Yūgiri now instructed them in their duties. It was many years since his thoughts about Murasaki had been other than he could publish to all the world. But since he caught sight of her on the morning of the typhoon, he had often wondered whether they would ever again be brought together. Her voice he now knew he would never hear; but there was still a chance to see her once again, and while scolding one of the maids for the loudness of her sobbing, as though absent-mindedly, he pulled up a corner of the curtains. The daylight was still feeble, and he could see very little. But at that moment Genji [1] himself held up the great lamp, bringing it so close to the couch that Yūgiri suddenly saw her in all her loveliness. 'And why should he not see her?' thought Genji, who knew that Yūgiri was peeping. But in a moment he covered his eyes with his sleeve. 'It is almost worse to see her now, while she is still unchanged,' he said. 'One thinks that she will speak, move. . . .' Yūgiri brushed away the tears that kept on dimming his eyes. Her hair lay spread across the pillows, loose, but not tangled or disorderly, in a great mass, against which in the strong lamplight her face shone with a dazzling whiteness. Never, thought Genji, had her beauty seemed so flawless as now, when the eye could rest upon it undistracted by any ripple of sound or motion. Yūgiri gazed astounded. His spirit seemed to leave him, to float through space and hover near

[1] From inside the curtains.

her, as though it were he that was the ghost, and this the lovely body he had chosen for his habitation.

As neither Genji nor any of the ladies who had been long in Murasaki's service were in a condition to make the final arrangements, all this, as well as the duty of encouraging and consoling the bereaved, fell upon Yūgiri. His life had brought him occasion to witness many scenes of sorrow, but none so pitiful as those that now ensued ; nor did he imagine that it could ever fall to his lot again.

For many days afterwards he remained in close attendance upon his father, trying by every means he could think of to distract and console him. The equinoctial gales had begun to blow, and to-night it came back vividly to Yūgiri's mind how he had caught sight of her on the morning of the great typhoon. And then again on the day she died. That Genji should mourn was well enough ; but what right had Yūgiri to this grievous pain ? And to hide his sorrow he drew a rosary towards him, and clicking the beads loudly he muttered, 'Amida, Amida, Amida Buddha,' so swiftly that the falling of his tears could not be heard.

Day and night Genji wept, till it seemed that a veil of tears hung between him and the world. A thousand times he asked himself what use they had ever been to him—this beauty, of which so much had been said, these talents that were supposed to raise him above all his peers ? No sooner did he come into the world than loneliness and sorrow fell to his share. And then as though Buddha feared that even now he might harbour some remnant of trust in life and its joys, loss upon loss was visited upon him, from all of which he had in the end recovered. But now at last this greatest of imaginable sorrows had indeed effected what all previous afflictions had failed to achieve. No longer did he ask for a day more in the world, save that he might devote it to penances and fasting. And yet, if anything stood between

him and the demands of religion, it was this very sorrow, which by its insensate violence had so unarmed him that he knew himself to be in no fit state to take his vows. Often he prayed earnestly that a moment of oblivion might come in which he could embrace the life he craved for. There were times too when another consideration weighed with him. If he were at once to enter an Order, it would be thought that he had done so yielding weakly to an impulse of the moment—had been unhinged by the shock of a sudden bereavement ; and this was an impression that he by no means wished to create.

Thus the struggle between his desire to embrace a different life, and his distaste for the impression he would create by doing so, further increased his agitation.

Even in the matter of condolences Tō no Chūjō made a point of never going beyond what, in his view, the occasion strictly demanded. And it indicated on his part a very high view of Murasaki's worth that he now not merely paid the formal visit of sympathy, but followed it by numerous letters. He remembered that it had been just this time of year, the middle of the eighth month, when his sister Aoi died ; and of those who had then mourned her, how many had since followed in her tracks ! So he was reflecting one cheerless evening, when autumn had more than ever set its mark upon the sky. Sending for his son Ben no Shōshō, he wrote a long letter to Genji, and in the margin : ' An autumn of the past seems like to-day, and adds fresh dew-drops to a sleeve already drenched with tears.' Memories of the past, not only of the time when Aoi died, but of a thousand episodes in which he and Tō no Chūjō had been linked together, now crowded to his mind, and it was through a stream of tears that he wrote the reply : ' This grief and that are mingled in my thoughts, and only this I know : that hateful is this season and all its ways.' In the letter

that he wrote with this poem there might have been, had he expressed the half of what he felt, a passionate outpouring of misery and despair. But he knew that Tō no Chūjō was apt to regard the expression of such feelings as a sign of reprehensible weakness, and promising to write again later, he now merely said: 'I cannot thank you enough for the sympathy that your many enquiries have shown.' 'Though light in hue the dress. . . .' So had Genji once [1] written. But custom could no longer restrain him, and he now wore what was not far removed from full mourning.

Nor indeed was grief confined to the immediate circles of the Court. It frequently happens that those who by favour have risen to such an eminence as that which Murasaki enjoyed are subjected to a good deal of general spite. Often they are felt, even when showing themselves most affable, to be so conscious of their superiority, that what they mean as kindness has merely the effect of making ordinary people additionally timid and uncomfortable. In Murasaki there was no suspicion of this. The rare loveableness of her nature had in one way or another made its impression even in the most unlikely quarters, and her partisans were as warm as they were ubiquitous. There were many who, though they belonged to a class of society very different from hers, could not during these autumn days hear with dry eyes either the rush of the wind or the cry of insects.

The Empress Akikonomu wrote constantly to Genji at this time. In one of her poems she said: 'Rightly she judged (no more will I gainsay it) who to dead leaves and weary autumn fields gave but a grudging praise.'

This letter, listless though he was, he read many times,

1 At the time of Aoi's death. See vol. i, p. 275. Full mourning was worn for a parent, but not for a wife.

and felt that if any one's company could serve at this moment to distract him a little from his misery, it would be hers. 'You that in far-off countries of the sky can dwell secure, look back upon me here ; for I am weary of this frail world's decay.' So he answered, and having folded the paper, sat for a long while gazing abstractedly before he sent it on its way.

So little could he trust himself to behave with proper dignity and restraint, that he altogether avoided the more public parts of the palace, spending most of his time in a room near the women's apartments at the back. Here he was able to pursue his devotions undisturbed. One thing only mattered to him now: to attain the certainty that, parted though they were upon earth, in Paradise they would for ever be refreshed by the dew of the same lotus.

The ceremonies of the Forty-ninth Day, for which (in his distraction) Genji had omitted to give any instructions, were arranged by Yūgiri. And so time passed, Genji constantly thinking that he would to-morrow take the step for which he longed. . . . But somehow he did not do so. For one thing, he longed first to see the Akashi Princess and her children.

XII

MIRAGE

SPRING shone once more upon the world ; and as in other years his doors were thronged by visitors. But he pleaded illness, and remained behind the screens-of-state. It was only when his half-brother, Prince Sochi, came that he felt inclined for a less formal salutation, and calling him into the screened recess, Genji recited the verse : ' Seek not in this domain the gladness of the year ; for gone is she with whom 'twas joy to praise the shining boughs of Spring.' Prince Sochi answered : ' Think not that I have come in quest of common flowers ; but rather to bemoan the loss of one whose scent has vanished from the air.' And when later on Genji watched his brother walking away beneath boughs of red plum-blossom, he felt that if any one could this year incite him to take pleasure in the beauty of the garden, it would be this Prince Sochi, to whom his heart always warmed. The flowers were not yet fully open ; but that is just the time when their scent is sweetest. But this year there were no concerts or picnics ; indeed, all was changed.

Those of Murasaki's ladies who had been long in her service were still dressed in deep mourning and were inconsolable as ever for her loss. Their only comfort was that Genji had quite ceased to pay any visits, and they were thus able to distract themselves by continually waiting upon him. It was long since he had had any serious dealings with people such as this. But there were some of them to whom he had at one time or another taken a fancy. If any of these now hoped to profit by the situation, they

were sadly mistaken. He slept alone; and those ladies who were retained for night service went on duty several at a time and were posted at a considerable distance from where he lay. Sometimes he would talk to them about old days. It seemed that, despite the increasing earnestness of her convictions, small matters (likely to have no lasting effect upon their relations) had at the time very much disturbed her; and it was intolerable to him that, trivial or ridiculous though the occasion might have been, he should ever have caused her to suffer. And much more when he came to think of the few more serious occasions. . . . How often, while perfectly understanding all that was going on in his mind, had she refrained from any reproach or complaint! But there must all the same have been times when, at any rate for the moment, it was quite impossible for her to foresee how this affair or that would turn out in the end; and he bitterly regretted that he should ever have caused her to watch him with anxiety and misgiving. He sometimes talked this over with those who had known her best in those days. There was the time when Nyosan first came to live with them. Murasaki had never been openly hostile; but she had certainly suffered very much. He remembered that snowy morning, when coming back to their room at dawn he found that she had been weeping. How gentle, how forbearing she had been, how she struggled to hide from him what she was enduring! And now he lay all night long, hoping against hope that he might so much as see her for an instant in his dreams. 'There's been quite a heavy fall of snow.' He woke up to hear some one saying this—no doubt one of the ladies, going back to her own quarters. More vividly than ever did he remember that other snowbound morning, and his loneliness became unendurable. To distract himself he dressed hastily and was soon absorbed in his devotions.

Presently the dead ashes were swept from his fire-stand, the buried flame shot up again and burned brightly in his room. Chūnagon and Chūjō, two of Murasaki's ladies, were with him. 'You may well imagine,' he said, 'that last night was no very good one for sleeping all alone. Why, when every circumstance seems aimed to wean me from the world, I should still cling to this sort of life, is more than I can explain.' But he was really thinking that to these ladies of hers the task of waiting upon him did afford some small comfort, and he wondered what would become of them when he was gone.

He had known Chūjō since she was a child, and there had at one time been an intimacy between them. This, while Murasaki was alive, made Chūjō very shy in Genji's presence. But since her death, they had (on quite different terms) again become friends. For the girl had been a great favourite of Murasaki's, and this reason alone sufficed to make her dear to him; he grafted her on to his life, like the pine-tree that grows on the green barrow of a tomb.

The princes with whom he had been most intimate, his brothers and cousins, called constantly; but he would see none of them. For despite all the efforts he made to get himself into a fit state for company, months of despondency had, he felt, worked such havoc with him, that if he were again to receive his friends, they would remember him as he now was, and not as they had once known him. But merely to hide would defeat his end; for if it got about that he was ashamed to be seen, or was so broken by sorrow that he could not maintain a rational conversation, an even worse impression might get abroad than was warranted by the truth. And lest it should be said that he had ended his days in decrepitude and imbecility, he began again to admit Yūgiri and a few others to his presence. But he spoke to them always from behind his curtains-of-state. About

one thing he was determined: he must recover himself sufficiently to meet people and show a good face to the world before he took the final step that he was contemplating. He attempted several times to visit the various ladies of his household; but he found himself unable to control his grief, and hastening home determined in future not to make any further effort to keep in touch with the world.

The Akashi Princess was now back at the Imperial Palace; but Genji persuaded her to let Prince Niou stay with him for a while. The child showed a great interest in the red plum-tree in front of his room, constantly trotting out to see that no harm came to it. His granny, he said, had told him to. It was only the second month, and though the flowering trees were all in bloom, they were not fully out, so that the shimmer of the blossoms hung like a delicate mist along the boughs; and when a nightingale began to sing in full voice upon a branch of Niou's tree, Genji could not refrain from coming out to listen. 'Knows he that she who built his shining bower hears him no more—the nightingale upon the red plum-tree?' So he murmured as he walked.

Spring advanced, and Murasaki's gardens took on their wonted splendour; but the sight of them gave him no pleasure, and indeed he longed to be in some place far off among the mountains, so bare and desolate that neither sight of flower nor song of bird would sharpen his sorrow First the globe-flower reached its glory in a tangle of dewy blossom. Then when the single cherry had fallen and the eight-fold giant cherry was almost over, the birch-cherry began to open, while the wistaria was still but faintly colouring, and held all its treats in store. How skilfully she had contrived her planting, so that wherever one turned there were later flowers to follow those that were early over, and others and ever more to take their place.

Little Niou, who had not yet discovered that the Nijō-in and the New Palace [1] were separate places, cried out in delight: 'Look, my cherry-tree is in bloom. I know what we'll do to prevent its losing the flowers. We'll put screens-of-state all round it, and then if no one opens the flaps, the wind cannot possibly get in.' This was certainly a good idea, and Genji smiling asked him if he knew the poem: 'Would that my sleeve were wide enough to cover . . .' 'But yours is a much more sensible plan,' he added. This little prince was the only person in whose company he now took pleasure. 'I am afraid we shall not be able to play together much longer,' he now said to the child. 'I do not mean that I am going to die; but I shall be living at a place where we cannot meet.' 'At a place where we cannot meet? That is what my granny said too . . .' and Niou lowered his eyes.

One evening when a faint haze mingled with the fading light, Genji at last set out to visit the Lady of Akashi. His visit took her completely by surprise; for it was a very long while since he had been near her. But she managed all the same to receive him in good style, and to make so agreeable an impression that he found himself wondering whether she were not after all the most charming person in the world. But then there came into his face an expression, the meaning of which she was perfectly well able to decipher: he was thinking how little she had ever interested him compared with Murasaki, and how useless it was to seek consolation in this or any other quarter.

'Even during my exile at Suma,' he said, when they had talked quietly for a while, 'I was already thinking of entering

[1] Genji's old palace (where Murasaki died) and the New Palace in the Sixth Ward, where the child now was.

[2] 'Would that my sleeve were wide enough to cover the spaces of the sky; then should the wind no longer at his pleasure scatter the flowers in Spring.'—Anon.

some monastic retreat far away from all human habitation, and there ending my days. And at the time there was not much reason why I should not do so. But in my latter years a thousand ties and duties have made such a prisoner of me that I could no longer dream of escape. But I feel ashamed that, while it was still possible, I had not firmness enough to take this step.' 'I do not think any one is likely to reproach you,' she answered. 'Even those whom no one would miss are often prevented from leaving the world by ties and affections that exist only on their side. And how much the less can you, upon whom so many persons depend, be expected to take such a step without misgiving? I think you are much more likely to be blamed for taking Orders in a rash and inconsiderate manner than for continuing your present life too long. I remember many cases of people leaving the world because they were upset about something; but I have always considered that a very foolish course. I feel sure you had better wait until the little princes are older and things have been settled in a manner that will rid you of all agitation and anxiety.' How wise such advice sounded! 'I fear,' he said, 'that such extreme circumspection as you recommend seems to me more culpable than any rashness.' He talked for a while about their own long friendship, and then said: 'Do you remember the Spring when Lady Fujitsubo died? Then I did indeed feel that "if the cherry-tree had any heart, it would flower with black blossom." I admired her for her taste and elegance; besides, we had been brought up together as children, so that it was natural I should feel her loss. But this is a very different business. It is not only as a wife that I miss her. She came to me so young, and it seemed as though we had so many years before us. . . . When I consider her charm, her talents, her wit, I am overwhelmed at the thought of what has befallen me. . . .'

They sat talking of old times till late that night. He would indeed have, in a way, been happy to stay there till morning. But none the less, he went home, though he knew that this would disappoint her. 'What a change from the Genji of old days!' he thought, as he left her rooms. Going straight to his day quarters he resumed his devotions, taking no more repose than a few minutes' rest upon his couch.

The time of the Festival[1] came round, and Genji, thinking of the lively throngs that would soon be gathering at the Shrine, sent all Murasaki's people back to their families. 'They will be disappointed if they miss the sights,' he said. 'Let them go quietly home and attend the Festival from there.' It so happened that as Genji came along towards the Eastern Wing he found Chūjō no Kimi taking a hurried sleep. She rose quickly when she heard his step, and in the moment that elapsed before she hid her face in the wide sleeve of her gown he had time to note the liveliness of her features, the fine poise of her head. Her hair, ruffled during her nap, spread down in a wide tangle, as she now stood with bent head. Her trousers were red, with faint markings in yellow. Her robe, of sombre purple, with patterns in very dark colours, was folded all awry, and her Chinese cloak had slipped from her shoulders. While setting herself to rights she laid down the hollyhock[2] she had been carrying in her hand, and picking it up Genji said: 'What is this thing? I have positively forgotten what they are called.' 'On this day of all days, when the water-plant is set in the pot to which the God descends, can you forget the garland's name?' Such was the acrostic poem with which she answered him, and he: 'Nothing, I thought, in the wide world could tempt me. But lo,

[1] The Kamo Festival in the fourth month.

[2] Worn by worshippers at the Kamo Festival. Its name also means 'day of meeting,' and there is a play on this in both poems.

the hollyhock has shown that in my fancy lurk treacheries unsubdued.'

During the heavy rains of the fifth month he grew weary of sitting day after day with nothing to distract him, and towards the middle of the month, one night when the rain had stopped and the moon appeared in marvellous splendour between the clouds, he called Yūgiri to him. The orange-blossom glowed in the moonlight, and an exquisite fragrance was wafted towards them where they sat. They were hoping every moment to hear 'the voice that eternally revisits those changeless haunts,' [1] when huge clouds came rolling up, rain began to pelt, and a sudden gust of wind almost blew out the lamp. 'I am getting used to solitude,' he said to Yūgiri; 'but to-night for some reason I was feeling very lonely. My life here is certainly such that I shall be in very good practice when I arrive at my mountain temple!' He remembered that Yūgiri had not been offered anything. 'One of the ladies can bring the fruit,' he said. 'We shall not require any gentlemen in attendance to-night. They would only be a worry to us.' Yūgiri meanwhile, watching his father's face, wondered whether he were really so well prepared for the cloister as he imagined. It was clear that his thoughts were still at every moment centred on the one subject of his loss, and this was hardly a state of mind that promised him much success in his devotions. But Yūgiri, who was still haunted by the glimpse of her he had caught on that unforgettable morning, felt that he could understand his father's condition. 'The anniversary will soon be here,' he reminded Genji. 'Have you any instructions to give?' 'I do not know,' replied Genji, 'that there is much point in doing anything out of the ordinary. But I think this would be the right time to dedicate that picture of Amitabha's Paradise which she ordered before

[1] The cuckoo.

she died. I know that she gave one of her chaplains full instructions about the dedication, and if there is anything else that requires doing, you had better go to him for advice.' 'I am sure we shall have no difficulty about anything of that kind,' answered Yūgiri, 'for she went into all these matters with the minutest care; indeed, if any soul ever deserved salvation, I am sure it is hers. But what a pity it is that, dying so young, she left behind her no real heir to her beauty and talents! It is a thing I have always regretted. . . .' 'The fault,' said Genji, 'lay perhaps not so much in her destiny as in mine. Look how few children I have had altogether! You are the one whom Fate has endowed with a fine brood of heirs! There is no fear of your house shrinking into oblivion.' He knew that if the conversation turned upon the past, he might at any moment display his weakness in a manner that he wished above all things to avoid. Suddenly the long expected voice of the Cuckoo came to his rescue, and with singular appropriateness he quoted the poem, 'How can the Cuckoo have known?'

> 'Come you in quest of her that is no more, O Cuckoo,
> Who through the drenching rain did hurry from your hill?'

So Genji now sang, and Yūgiri answered him: 'Search rather in your Dark Land,[1] O Cuckoo, and tell her that the tree she planted is in bloom.'

Yūgiri remained at his father's disposition all night; and it gave him a strange sensation to move without restraint in these quarters which, during Murasaki's lifetime, had been surrounded by so much mystery.

During the Gosechi dancing[2] that year Yūgiri's two older boys acted as pages at the Court. They were about

[1] The cuckoo is called Headman of the Hill of Death.
[2] In the eleventh month.

the same height, and looked very pretty together. Kurōdo and his brothers,[1] who had been chosen to act as heralds at the Tasting of the New Rice and were wearing the magnificent blue-printed robes of their office, took charge of the boys and introduced them into the Presence. What, Genji asked himself as he watched the boys, lay behind that wondering and innocent expression? And once more he vividly recalled the little Gosechi dancer who had caught his own fancy years ago.

As the day drew near when his present life of seclusion in the midst of the Court was to reach its close, he spent his time chiefly in going through his possessions and deciding what was to become of them after his departure. Much of his property he now dispersed in a succession of small gifts, avoiding any such considerable transference as would excite attention; for up till now his retainers knew nothing of the disaster that awaited them. But it was known that his heart was set upon retirement, and they awaited the turn of the year with great apprehension.

One task that now devolved upon him was the destruction of letters such as it would be embarrassing to leave behind. Many he had torn up long ago; but often he had put a letter aside meaning to destroy it, and then had never brought himself to do so. Now, as opportunity offered, he took them out a few at a time, and went through them carefully. Among those that he had received at Suma, most of which he now tore up or threw away, there were a lot of Murasaki's letters carefully tied up in a bundle. It must indeed have been he himself who did up the packet, though so long a time had passed that he had no recollection of doing so. The ink was as fresh as on the day when they were written, and looked as if it would remain so for hundreds of years. But what was the use of such a keepsake? He could not

[1] Younger sons of Tō no Chūjō.

take it with him. . . . He sent for two or three of the ladies with whom she had been most intimate and began handing them the letters, one after another, to tear up. But soon, while he held the letters, his tears flowed so fast upon each page that fresh tracks were added to those the pen had made, and at last, unwilling to display his weakness, he pushed the bundle of letters away from him, reciting as he did so the verse : ' So longs my heart for her that past the Hill of Death is gone, not even upon the tracks she left can I endure to gaze.' [1] The ladies did not, of course, unfold the pages that were handed to them ; but they caught sight of a phrase here and there—sufficient to tell them what the letters were ; and it was with a pang that they now destroyed them. They remembered several of those letters being written. And if then, when she and Genji were separated only by a few miles and there was every prospect of their soon meeting again, Murasaki's misery had been such as they well remembered, could they wonder that now the sight of them was more than he could bear ?

He took one from the bundle, and without stopping to read it, he wrote in the margin : ' Go, useless leaves, well steeped in brine, to join the smoke that through the pathways of the sky trailed from her smouldering pyre ' ; and forthwith he had the whole lot burnt.

He celebrated the Festival of Buddha's Names [2] with unusual solemnity, for he knew that it was the last he would see in his palace. Never had been heard such jangling of shakujō [3] as on those nights. It was strange to hear the priests repeating the usual prayer that he ' might long enjoy his present high estate,' and he hoped that the Lord

[1] *Ato* means ' tracks ' and also ' handwriting.'
[2] On the 21st, 22nd and 23rd of the twelfth month.
[3] The long, priest's begging-staff, with metal rings attached to the top.

Buddha would know how far this prayer was removed from his real desires. Snow lay deep on the ground and was still falling. When the services were over, he sent for the leader of the procession, and having gone through the usual forms of handing him the wine-cup and so on, made handsome presents to all who had taken part in the ceremony.

The leader had for years past been employed at the Imperial Palace; he had been well known to the Old Emperor,[1] and Genji noted with emotion how grey the old man's head had grown in the service of his family.

There was the usual levée of princes and courtiers. On a few plum-trees there was already a faint hint of blossom, all the lovelier for the snow that lay heaped upon their boughs. There should have been feasting and music in the palace; but even this year his grief still stifled in him all desire for song, and he arranged that only a few Chinese verses, appropriate to the season, should be recited at his levée.

But I had forgotten to mention the poem he made when he handed the wine-cup to the head priest. It was as follows: 'Who knows in winter if the spring time he shall see? Wait not for blossom, but take the budding spray and wear it at your brow.' 'For nought else have I prayed, save that a thousand spring-tides you might see; till silver snow has blossomed on my brow.' So the priest replied, and many other poems were made, which need not be here recorded.

This was the first occasion since Murasaki's death upon which Genji had mingled with his guests. They thought him more beautiful than ever, and the aged priest could not refrain from tears of joy.

Remembering that this was the end of the year, little Niou went scampering about saying every one must do

[1] Genji's father.

something to scare away the demons, and asking what noise he might make. In a few days Genji would see the child no more; and sadly he recited the verse: 'Whilst I in heedless grief have let the days go by, together now the year and my own life are ebbing to their close.' He gave orders that the New Year ceremonies should be performed with more than usual splendour, and saw to it that the princes and Court officers who came to the palace should receive such presents and bounties as never before.[1]

[1] The next chapter begins with the words: 'After Prince Genji's death. . . .'

The Tale of Genji

By LADY MURASAKI

Translated by ARTHUR WALEY

I. The Tale of Genji

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IV. Blue Trousers

Genji has decided to find a husband for his ward Tamakatsura. Yūgiri (Genji's son) is still in love with Kumoi (Tō no Chūjō's daughter); but Tō no Chūjō is more ambitious on her behalf, and would like to establish her in the Emperor's Palace.

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THE TALE OF GENJI

By

Lady Murasaki

Translated by Arthur Waley

ARTHUR WALEY, brilliant scholar and translator, perhaps the best authority on the literature of the Orient, classes this book as 'by far the greatest novel of the East,' and states that 'even if compared with the fiction of Europe, "The Tale of Genji" takes its place as one of the dozen greatest masterpieces of the world.' Not only is it among the first novels in excellence, but in antiquity as well, for it was written about the year 1000.

Readers of the 'Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan' have already met the Lady Murasaki and have read in Amy Lowell's introduction to that book what is known of this remarkable woman.

Genji, the young prince whose exploits are chronicled in the present volume, is not a mere courtly warrior but a living young man. The story of his amorous adventures is told in a surprisingly modern manner. Both as a splendidly alive and absorbing story and as an unequaled picture of court life in mediæval Japan, this great novel will be keenly enjoyed by many generations of American readers.

The Tale of Genji

by Lady Murasaki

Translated by Arthur Waley

From Critics and Reviewers

'Fielding's "Tom Jones" with music by Debussy. Vigorously alive . . . its petals drift on eternal flesh and blood.' — WITTER BYNNER *in the New York Herald Tribune.*

'Wonderful beauty. . . . A forgotten civilization comes to life with a completeness surpassed only by the greatest of our novelists.' — *London Times.*

'A most astonishing volume that will rank as one of the greatest masterpieces of the world. It not only resembles Proust, but it reminds us of "Tom Jones."' — LLEWELLYN JONES *in the Chicago Post.*

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'Genji is wholly a delight. It brings sheer happiness by its truth, beauty, humor, its understanding of humanity and zest for life, its admirable richness of texture. The dominant quality of the novel is a deep savoring beauty, at times seen in a passionate eagerness for life, or again permeated by a dream quality of loveliness more intimated than conveyed. . . . A book which adds to the permanent richness of life.' — *The Saturday Review of Literature.*

'As if Proust had rewritten "The Arabian Nights."' — WILLIAM CURTIS *in Town and Country.*

'When completed "The Tale of Genji" will probably form one of the twelve great novels of the world. Almost all the qualities which the European novel has been slowly gathering are here already.' — RAYMOND MORTIMER *in the Nation and Atheneum.*

I. The Tale of Genji
II. The Sacred Tree
III. A Wreath of Cloud
IV. Blue Trousers